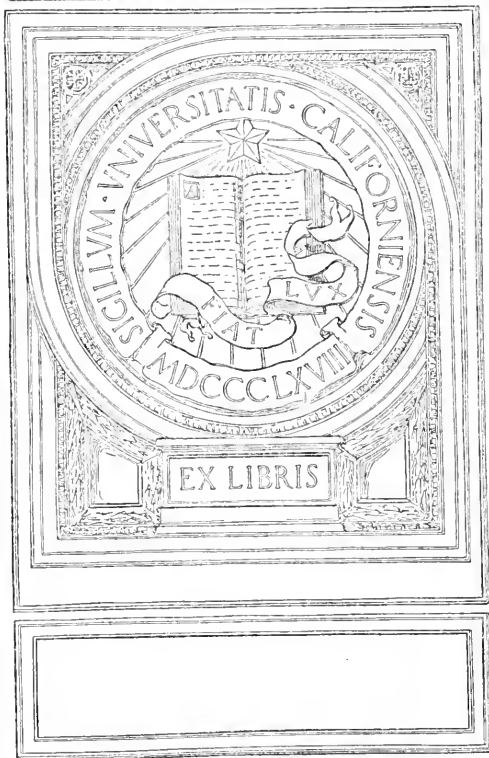


REVOLUTION

—
LÉONIE AMINOFF



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES

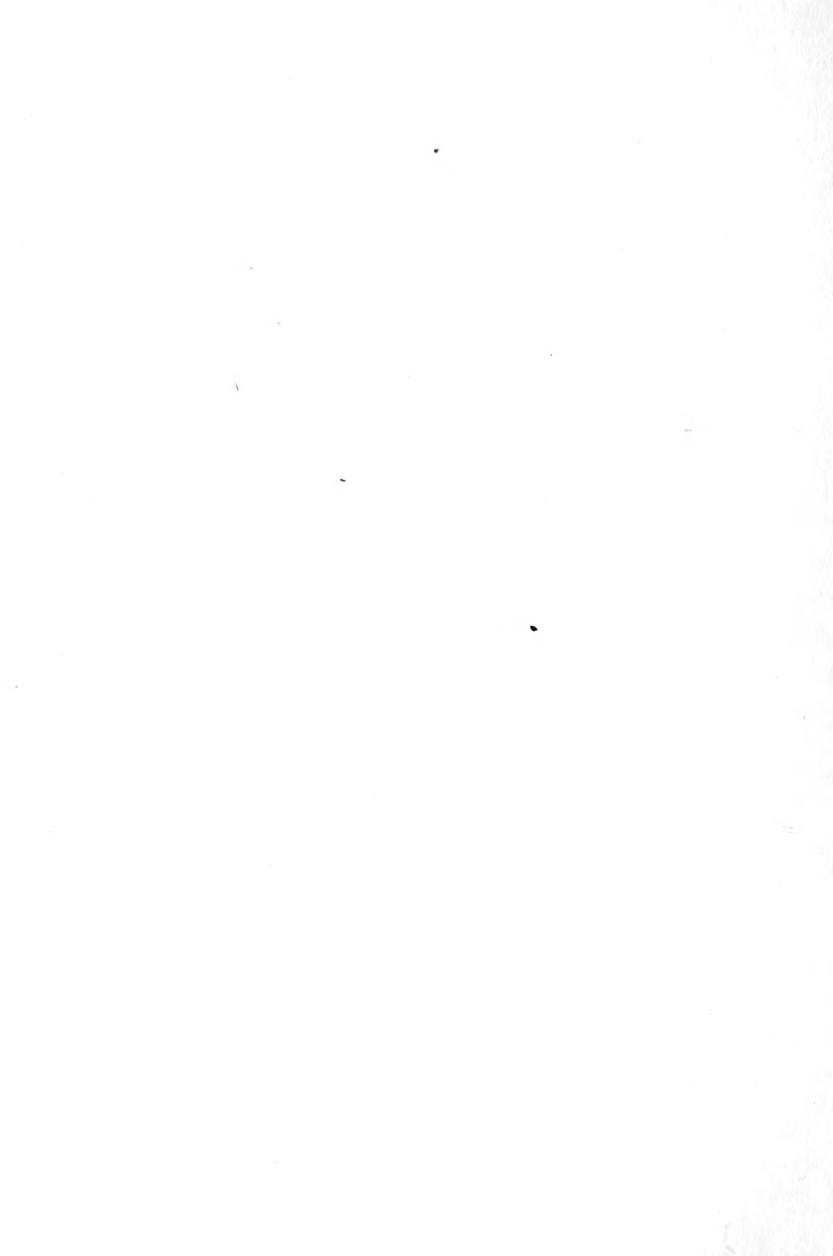


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TORCHLIGHT

REVOLUTION

The TORCHLIGHT Series
of Napoleonic Romances

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VIII.....ARROGANCE
IX.....STORM
X.....RETREAT
XI.....DEFEAT
XII.....THE END

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

The TORCHLIGHT Series
of Napoleonic Romances

REVOLUTION

BY
LÉONIE AMINOFF



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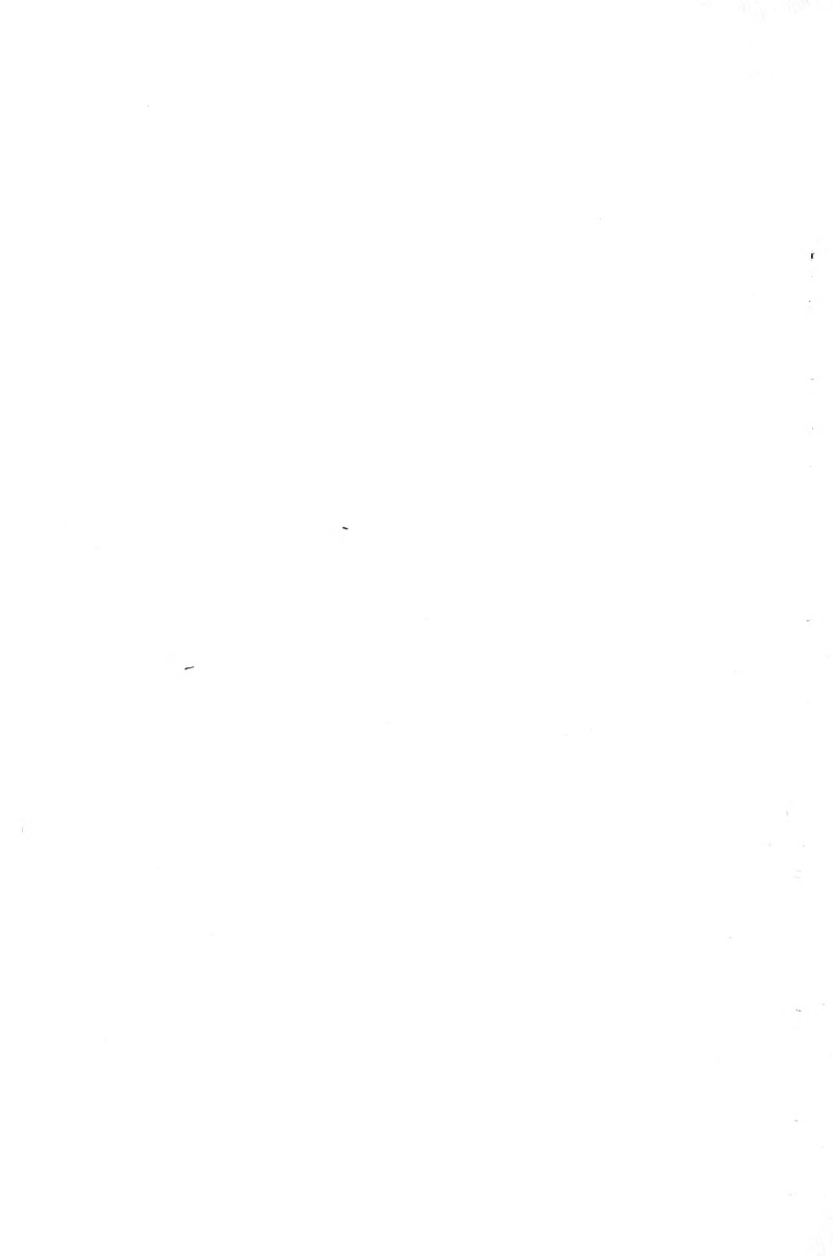
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

IN offering her work to the public, partly in honor of Napoleon's centenary, May, 1921, the author begs to say that she has not only relied on the statistical statements taken from the vast bulk of Napoleonic literature, but also on the personal point of view, which, to an imaginative mind, is of greater importance. She has called her work *Torchlight*. It may not be a good title—not that titles matter—but surely it is symbolic of her attitude? Without some kind of light we poor human beings are in a sad way, and an artist is frankly lost. The human mind resembles a torch—we like the idea of a torch now burning sullenly, now bursting into a flame of purest light!

In this particular volume Napoleon is shown in the first stage of his wonderful career against a more or less detailed background of the French Revolution, which, as it were, ploughs a passage for his advance. Even he would have failed in a world of peace.

The book is inscribed to the author's twin sister, Sylvia, and her three little daughters, Nadine, Pamela, and Flora McDougall, who have taken flattering interest in the work, most of it written under the ancient roofs of Provender (their home) in the Black Prince's own chamber, so called since that valiant knight (1346) occupied it, on his way to join his father's standard in France.



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BOOK I
REVOLUTION

TORCHLIGHT

CHAPTER I

DURING the inaugural ceremony of affianced love Térézia held herself apart with charming modesty. She veiled her eyes from the too ardent gaze of Devin. She clasped her hands together under mamma's tearful harangue. She wished mamma at Jericho. Why make a fuss about an extraordinarily commonplace situation? Everyone married. Marriage was the first step of any importance in life. From the bridal altar the road led in many directions. Térézia, half-listening to mamma and to the marquis's choked commentaries, grew thoughtful. She looked very lovely, very young, very innocent.

With a final embrace which effectually included both the lovers, Marie-Antoinette left the room somewhat hastily. She had just remembered some trifling detail of her dinner-table which hadn't pleased her. She would speak to Christina at once. What on earth had made Pedro fold the napkins in such an outlandish pattern? Swans were all the fashion and sufficiently elaborate, but tall, spiky, insecure turrets of an impossible architecture were, to put it plainly, "real horrors." . . . On his knees sank the lover, stretching out beseeching arms, rolling his eyes in a fearful endeavor to look attractive. "Angel," he moaned. It was the saddest exhibition.

Térézia, overcome by bashfulness (or was it laughter?), turned her back draperies to his languishing gaze, and, to do something, began rearranging the flowers on the chimney-piece. It was more than mortal lover could endure. A costumier of the first rank might have found consola-

tion in admiring the charming folds of a rose-pink dress which charmingly revealed the lines of a charming figure. . . . Devin had no artistic talent to help him in his hour of need—he was all heart, and that tender organ was being lacerated by indifference.

The marquis, fired by rage, did a fine stroke of business. He leapt to his feet, caught the lady backwards, and twisting her round—just as easily as she had been twisting the long-suffering roses—faced her all burning, all aglow—“wild” as she told her deeply impressed Claire the following morning, “and he kissed me all over.”

He succeeded in impressing her.

“Mademoiselle,” he said presently, “I will be your slave, your humble watchful slave, I’ll ask nothing in return but this” (he kissed her slender fingers). “I ask your forgiveness—but you sent me mad. You are the most beautiful creature in the world.”

The first transport over, she led him to a little sofa, sat down beside him, and looked at him with the eye of a connoisseur who has recently purchased an article of doubtful value. Couldn’t she have done better? He was certainly very ugly—but there was warmth in the little man. How he loved her! Térézia smiled. She felt just a little sorry for him.

It was twilight, and in the grateful shadows of the big room one hardly noticed his red hair or even the color of his unfortunate skin . . . she would make him give greater attention to his appearance . . . oh, he would “do” very well.

“I love you, dear Devin,” she murmured. “I intend to be ideally happy. Presently I’ll go upstairs to bed—I am just a little bit tired, which is only reasonable. To be engaged is such a very new sensation and I’ll sleep so soundly and dream of my little Devin.”

He drew himself up. He was by no means “little” in his own consideration. He considered himself a fine figure of a man. His “unfortunate” skin deepened in color. Térézia, with a woman’s quick intuition, remedied her fault.

"There is only one thing which makes me nervous," she began.

(That was as it ought to be.) Fontenay smiled tenderly. "Whenever you have anything on your mind, darling, always remember to tell me."

"Indeed I will."

"My little lamb!"

The lamb cuddled a shade closer to M. de Fontenay. She looked up at him shyly. "Oh, you great big tyrant, I am afraid of you! When you look at me—I feel all—so." She shivered.

He was alarmed. "I have been too hasty," he murmured. "I have startled my dear lamb. I'll be more gentle in future. On my word of honor as a nobleman you can trust me!" He sat very upright and puffed out his narrow chest. "'Faith' is the watchword of our House."

"I am greatly obliged, monsieur. To tell you the truth, it is rather an ordeal to marry into such a distinguished family. What would you say if your little lamb makes an exhibition of herself?"

"I'll kiss her and forgive her." He pressed her fingers. "Dear little hand worthy of royal jewels. Are you fond of gems, mademoiselle?"

"Moderately so, monsieur. Papa has kindly given me a few pretty ornaments." She fingered the pearls round her neck. "These are considered rather fine."

"Nothing to what I intend to give you. You will have the use of my heirloom jewels—most of them were brought into my family by Marie de Rohan, who married one of my ancestors in the reign of Louis XIII."

"Ah!" said Térézia, warmly. "Dear big tyrant, your little lamb does love you, very much."

CHAPTER II

TÉRÉZIA held out her arms. Her ruffles were of real Mechlin—her dress a shadow chintz muslin of a thinness warranted to stand no laundry. Round her throat she wore a narrow velvet band with a diamond slide, on her bare feet a pair of black velvet slippers with diamond half-moons—"Only paste, my angel."

This latter remark was addressed to her best friend, Mademoiselle Claire de Cardillac, after the young ladies had kissed each other with effusion.

Claire very often tripped in to pay dear Térézia a morning call. She lived quite close by, in the gloomy great stone mansion facing the Bank of France, which prospect gave the house and the family, as Claire was fond of saying, a solidity beyond reproach.

Claire was also an only daughter. Her father had a minor post at court, which the family considered extremely important. Térézia shared completely her friend's feelings on the subject. It was delightful to have the *entrée*. One day, perhaps, Claire would be selected to wait upon the queen, to carry her little pails of frothy cream, and dab the royal butter on the little marble slabs when majesty played at work. To play at work! What a delightfully easy task! Térézia envied her friend.

Claire loved Térézia. Claire was seventeen, but she was a baby compared to the "big beauty" (who was only fifteen). She wasn't a beauty, the little Claire; her dark hair wasn't famous; her nose might have been better; her mouth a trifle smaller—but oh, it couldn't have been more good-natured. She would have run all Térézia's errands (had she been allowed); in a word, she adored Térézia.

There are many such friendships in this world. Beautiful belief on one side, beautiful condescension on the other;

take my word for it, the former is, as a rule, as unjustifiable as the latter. Claire was as good as gold—the most unselfish little girl in Paris, and clever in her way—together desirable as wife, mother, or friend. But she was ignored. No one noticed *la petite là*. She was lost in the flaming aureole of Térézia's magnificence, a little humble satellite—good enough (when the beauty felt disposed) to receive her confidences.

Half, if not three parts, of the joy of making “conquests” is the telling of the oft-repeated tale. Claire had during the last year lived in a vortex of agonizing suspense. Térézia was daring—greatly daring. . . .

“I have made up my mind to marry,” declared Térézia, sinking down on the *chaise longue*—“Give me my polisher, there's a darling. Oh, it is somewhere—I had it just a minute ago; my nails are too disgraceful for words.”

“Don't bite them.”

“Can't you find it?”

“Here it is. What lovely roses!”

“Who sent them, guess?”

“Monsieur de Listenay.”

“That old horror! I always give his roses to Christina. No matter how beautiful they are, Christina gets them. She invariably burns them. She hates de Listenay's flowers; she is a terror, is Christina. She always finds me out. Come here, come here.”

Claire ran across the room.

“Yes?” she said, bending over her friend.

“I met him last night,” she whispered.

“Antoine de Boisgaloup?”

“Yes, Georges will cut his head off if he hears the truth. He is studying hard at the military college. He writes the most adorable letters. Where is his last one?—on my work table, angel. Do read it, if you care to. He has made friends with a thin, sulky youth who works like the very devil. You admire industry, Claire? Georges shall introduce you to this paragon. He'll love you. He'll marry you. I have a thousand things to tell you.”

"Don't bite your nails, Térézia, dear, you will ruin them."

"True, I am a fool. The paragon's name is Napoleon Bonaparte—if you want to know."

"It does not interest me in the least. However, I admire his energy."

Térézia yawned and kicked one foot. The slipper fell off. "My feet are charming," she said.

"They are beautiful. You are so lovely, Térézia."

"I suppose I am. It is a great responsibility. Thank your stars you are only presentable."

"Don't flatter me. I am frankly ugly. Did you ever see such lank, distressful hair? When I marry I'll wear a wig two feet high. You won't know me. I shall look so tall and dignified."

Térézia sat up. "I said he'd propose!"

"Yes."

"Are you pleased?"

"Mamma and papa are satisfied."

"Little fool! Look at me. I have accepted Monsieur de Fontenay."

Claire screamed. "Oh, but he is not worth such an honor. He is red-haired—he is short, he is vain."

Térézia nodded. "Perfectly true, my friend. But he has an excellent position. He has a charming country house, and 'Madame la marquise de Fontenay' sounds respectable. I'll be received at court, and hold my own salon. I shall be a great lady." She blew a kiss to the gilt Cupid over her bed. "And I intend to make the best of my opportunities." She rose to her feet and clasped Claire in her arms. "You have never grasped my ambitions, my soaring, towering ambitions. I want to live, to live!" She almost screamed. "What is the good of having a matchless body and a matchless face if you don't dazzle your world?" She nodded her head. "I'll eat every crumb of my cake—the sugar first. It is an inherited taste. Mamma loves sugar." She laughed sardonically. "I frighten you, *pauvre petite*? I am wild to-day, Claire;

I want to start at once, at once! Life never waits. I want to fly! There, kiss me, darling. When I am tired you shall console me."

"I thought you loved Georges?"

Térédia laughed and drew Claire on to the sofa. "*Enfin*," she said, "I love him, he is a dear boy, but you must admit he is no *parti*. Why, he stands in deadly terror of that horrid mother of his, Madame de Boisgaloup. Even at the most burning moments he never forgets her acid tongue. She is as sour as vinegar. Why shouldn't Georges love me? It is so natural. I have run risks for his sake solely to spite *tante* Louise. Do you remember the day I crept through the pantry window, and my lace petticoat caught on a nail, and Madame de Boisgaloup found the lace, and nearly thrashed me? She shook, my dear, trembled with rage. Mamma looked as if she was being gently run over by a heavy cart——"

"Don't, Térédia; Madame de Carrabus is an angel of goodness."

"So she is, but wearisome. I wish angels didn't cry so much. Tears ruin the complexion."

"Are you serious?"

"About mamma's complexion?"

"No, no. In marrying de Fontenay."

"Stop to lunch and stay on to dinner. I will take no refusal. Then you'll have the pleasure of watching a unique courtship. He is far too terrified of his happiness to speak; he only gapes, rubs his red mop, and gapes. At the end of an hour's gaping he'll blurt out, with fierce unexpectedness, 'Mademoiselle, vous êtes très belle.' It is as good as a play."

"You must not make fun of him. No doubt he is better than he looks."

"We'll hope so."

"Térédia, do you love him?"

"Of course not. How could you love a little red-haired man who gapes?"

"Why consider him?"

"Silly child, I am not going to repeat myself."

"He sent you those roses?" said Claire sadly.

Térézia gleefully shut her eyes. "Exactly. As he has got red hair, he sends me red roses. Isn't it splendid?"

"Is he of good family?"

"A marquis."

Claire sighed. "I know I shall hate him."

"You couldn't hate anyone. Don't bother your little head. We'll get along famously. What is the time? Twelve o'clock. We lunch at one. I must dress. Kiss me, Claire. You are a darling. If I hate him very much I'll pass him on to you. Monsieur le cousin will of course object—but you are always kind."

Claire's soft brown eyes were full of tears. She spoke with emotion. "This is no matter for fun," she said earnestly. "I want to assure myself of your happiness."

"Pouff," said Térézia. "Set your mind at ease. I intend to have a good time."

It was quite a dinner-party, including Monsieur Georges de Marmont, le marquis Devin de Fontenay—to give him his full title—who sat next Térézia (a wonder in *bleu tendre* lavishly draped; in her yellow hair, combed high in the Spanish style, a dark rose—red—nodded over her shell-like ear; another rose—blush-white—at her slender waist; her fingers bare, her arms bare, her neck discreetly veiled; the rise and the fall of her ungirdled bosom, the flash of her eyes, her vivacious mouth, her white teeth were the cynosure of all eyes and mamma's obvious pride and the admiration of M. Alexandre de Lameth. He eyed the blush-white rose at Térézia's bosom with passionate affection—his gift . . .), Madame Lameth—a sparkling brunette who did not in the least mind her young husband's flirtations; that firebrand, Mirabeau—a rare guest at any dinner-party—heaven knows how Marie-Antoinette had landed him at her table—silent as an oyster, and as hard to open—and last but not least Comte de Ravoral, a man of genius, and cynical beyond report (which gave him a

rope of immeasurable length). He was quite bald and showed his originality by not disguising the fact. He was very elegantly dressed, his coat fitted faultlessly—hiding not a line of his shrunken figure, his hands were a marvel of well-tended wrinkles and tinted nails; his mouth was loose, inclined to hang at the corners, but when he talked and smiled this little defect was not apparent. He was fond of saying that only in repose is the face unmasked. Report had it that he slept behind bed-curtains carefully pinned together. He was never taken unawares,—M. le comte. He was known to be poor, but he invariably appeared a rich man. He dined out frequently—they said, because he could not afford to breakfast—he never denied a lie nor admitted a truth. In truth a very able man. As he said himself, he had the misfortune to live at the wrong time. He would have had a remarkable career if he had been born twenty years before his estimable parents' marriage or forty years after—as it was he was sandwiched between two epochs. He sometimes talked of the glory of Louis XIV.'s reign, and he was equally feeling when dilating on the prospects of Madame de Lameth's youngest-born—a veritable cherub in long clothes. Madame de Lameth encouraged the old man. Her one desire was to be amused. He—*le vieux comte*—was so wickedly amusing. . . .

Madame de Carrabus, very fat, very gorgeous in orange satin—and black Chantilly—beamed on the company. She sat at the head of the oval table, behind a tall *épergne* of solid gold filled with water-lilies. Two small “aquariums” sunk in moss, containing gold-fish in perpetual motion, gave a *clou* to the table. There was also some really magnificent fruit sent with the compliments of M. de Listenay, who had been unavoidably prevented from accepting Madame de Carrabus' kind invitation. (As a matter of fact he hadn't had the heart to face his successful rival.)

The dinner was gay and of excellent quality, the wine *recherché*. If you entertain the *élite* you cannot do less. There was a whisper in Paris, a faint, faint whisper, that

Carrabus' affairs weren't quite so rosy as for instance the delectable peach facing M. de Fontenay. That infatuated lover had at a mere rumor—no thicker than air—gone *exprès* to Madame Carrabus and begged (on his knees) for the honor of her daughter's hand without a *sou* of *dot*. Such sterling love touched the good lady. She had with warmth extended a fat hand, raised the supplicant to his feet and promised to write without delay on the matter to Carrabus.

Yesterday, thanks to M. Carrabus' promptness, she had been able to give him a satisfactory answer. Devin urged an early marriage. What had they to wait for? He had said as much to mamma, before dinner, overwhelmed by giddy good-fortune. At dinner he looked even more vacant than usual, and never ceased to "gape" at his beloved.

Térédia, when she remembered, vouchsafed her affianced lover a few tender glances. Once, when all the table was listening to Mirabeau's lightning wit, she clasped her fiancé's hot hand in her own, and whispered a fond nothing in his protruding ear. Then she glanced across at Claire—charming in simple white—with a woebegone expression. . . . M. de Ravoral (who was not listening to Mirabeau and detested him) intercepted the glance and laughed captiously. The old cynic only partially envied red-headed Fontenay his giddy good-fortune.

Alas, wit unless amusing is sand-colored. He was insufferably dull, poor de Fontenay—insufferably mean, and to crown God's work he had a temper of ten fiends. His mother (God rest her soul) ought to have known how to set about her son's education, once she had realized the color of his hair—she had brought him up on a mild system which had totally disagreed with his coloring. Now, at thirty-odd, he was a veritable tyrant, suspicious, jealous, untruthful, and with it all, tongue-tied except in the intimacy of his home. Once safely married Térédia would have her eyes opened and her hands tied. . . .

What a superb creature! The count shut his piercing

eyes the better to visualize her incomparable promise—after all she was barely full-grown. He considered her at say five-and-twenty—after eleven years' tutelage at the fount of flattery and adulation! By that time she would try to realize her own worth. . . . (Térézia at this period veiled her knowledge in public.) He hoped there wouldn't be a large family—he felt jealous of her perfect figure—too many babies invariably spoil a woman's shape. He glanced at Marie-Antoinette. . . . *Sacré bleu!*—what a criminal inheritance!

“Mademoiselle,” he said, with a poignant look of sorrow in his eyes, “I drink to your future. May I beg of you to take care of yourself.”

Térézia smiled, slightly astonished. She promised she would do her best.

By some tacit understanding, very shortly after coffee had been served in the green salon Madame Carrabus' friends took a formal farewell of their kind hostess.

As a rule it was understood that cards, wine, and music were at the disposal of any (or all) of the guests who desired to pass their evening until Pedro, assisted by Christina (she very conscious of her fashionable apron and a youthful cap all ribbons and lace—a gift of the delighted Térézia, who loved Christina's rather comical appearance in her best headdress), had solemnly handed round tea and cakes—very weak tea and we may be sure very fanciful cakes. Marie-Antoinette used to watch the heavily-laden silver trays with hospitable concern. Had Christina allowed enough? Great heavens! Once she had forgotten to slice the chocolate cake. Who would venture to cut it? To Marie-Antoinette's intense mortification it had passed the round of the company and out through the great folding doors, in the wake of Joseph's gorgeous livery, entirely untouched. She had shivered; unspeakable! She had rushed out on the heels of her guests to lecture Christina, all agog with righteous indignation, and that good woman had stared at her excited mistress and calmly assured her that it hadn't mattered in the least,

and that there had been plenty of other good things to eat. Marie-Antoinette had almost danced with impotent rage. "They will laugh at me," she had said. "They will say I don't know how to behave—in short that I am a provincial!" Christina at this juncture had in great haste fetched burnt feathers and smelling-salts. At the next entertainment she had cut the cake in such huge slices that Marie-Antoinette was obliged to reprimand "such vulgar display," and assure her faithful Christina that people in good society had no taste for "coarse eating." . . . Christina had not said one word in self-justification, but inwardly she had vowed that in future she would go her own way and let her mistress swoon to her heart's content before she hurried after remedies.

To-day nothing untoward happened.

At dinner, M. Mirabeau had bent an attentive ear to his hostess's reminiscences.

"I know, sir, I have grown fat. Fifteen years ago there was not a prettier girl in all Bayonne. I could pick and choose my lovers as you might plunge a stick in an ant-heap and gather a handful of insects by a twist of the wrist." She paused for breath. "What is the good of going over old ground? When the ball is cracked it will no longer bounce." She sighed heavily, and fanned herself. "The summer heats are early this year," she said. "Christina, be good and fetch me an iced drink. When your heart is sad there is great consolation in food. In Bayonne, I lived on air and roses and kisses."

"I do not doubt your word, madame."

Marie-Antoinette stared dreamily in front of her. The great room was carefully shuttered. From the street below came the tramp of horses' hoofs and the rumbling of heavy carriages.

Mirabeau had talked on in his usual half-satirical, half-serious manner. His voice always soothed Marie-Antoinette. M. Mirabeau explained some of his reasons for coming to Paris (the unimportant ones).

M. de Fontenay was the most abstemious of all. He was either too much in love or too nervous to eat. At dinner his cold salmon trout had remained untouched, and he had eaten his ice at one gulp, and had very nearly died in consequence; Térézia had gently slapped his back, which made him, as it were, die over again. Through tear-blistered eyes he had regarded his divinity . . . when he recovered himself he refused the cheese and biscuits. Térézia with charming gaiety tried to persuade him. He shook his head—another choking fit, and he'd impair his dignity for ever. He stuffed his napkin into his mouth—a most undignified gesture. “*Merci, merci, ma belle.*”

Térézia nibbled her biscuit and thin slice of Gorgonzola cheese with the air of a delighted little mouse. She was enjoying herself hugely. M. Mirabeau had actually discovered her presence. (Had she known it, he had a great weakness for women.) He had paid her a compliment! M. de Lameth had never ceased to look at her with his beseeching, beautiful blue eyes. Old Ravoral was more than usually audacious and amusing—and then, of course, beside her sat her incomparable Fontenay . . . altogether a charming dinner. . . .

As they passed out of the lofty dining-room, Térézia released M. de Fontenay's trembling arm, and ran up to “her darling Claire.” “Oh,” she whispered, “what do you think of him? Doesn't he gape like a big, big, hungry fish?—pouff! to think I am the little fish he is after. . . . Hush! Not a word! I love him! I adore him!”

She opened her mouth wide. Old Ravoral, leading mamma into the drawing-room, turned round and mouthed back at her. She put her hands to her eyes. “Spare me!” she cried. He did not catch what she said. He preened his neck round, but mamma sailed him into the green salon before he could make a suitable retort. He bowed his hostess to a sofa, where she took her place beside Madame de Lameth. The young girls, of course, seated themselves on chairs. “Do be careful,” implored Claire, “they will hear you.” “*Tant mieux,*” said Térézia,

crossing her little feet and looking at them affectionately. "Aren't they lovely?" she said.

Up came M. de Lameth.

"I have been in Hades all dinner," he murmured in the beauty's ear.

"I regret your possible discomfort, monsieur," said Térézia. "Here is a cool corner."

She swept her skirts aside. She had seated herself on a gilded cane bench, with her back to her ornate inlaid harp and a flaming group of azaleas. She possessed the artistic sense without which the most beautiful woman alive is less than perfect. She played with a little lace handkerchief—passing it through her fingers. Then quickly, before Mirabeau could discover her imprudence, she slipped it into Lameth's capacious pocket. "Your wife's," she murmured demurely. Ravoral looked up. Madame de Lameth laughed *de bon cœur*. Alexandre was quite at liberty to keep Térézia's handkerchief as long as it pleased him. His eyes said unspeakable things. Térézia shivered. "Won't you play something?" she murmured.

"Not now," he whispered, "ma toute belle, ma bien aimée." Again Madame de Lameth laughed *de bon cœur*. Old Ravoral knew very well what she was laughing at, and he exerted himself to turn her attention. He succeeded at last. She forgot the harp, the azaleas, the golden girl in pink, the charming man in blue. As to *le petit* Fontenay, he did not pretend to forget anything. He did nothing but gape at the tantalizing vision opposite him. Poor Claire in vain tried to show him some really charming prints and *gravures*—he'd have none of them. His round, slightly protruding eyes were fixed on the highly artistic *tout ensemble* opposite.

However, his agony of jealousy was not prolonged unreasonably. As we have said, the general company—including Claire—very soon took their leave with all the compliments of the day. "That indescribable devil in blue," to quote M. de Fontenay's mental definition of Madame de Lameth's husband, was obliged to follow his

smiling wife. She kissed Marie-Antoinette, and she kissed Térézia—"My dear," she said to the young girl, "all my felicitations. Your mother has just been telling me of M. de Fontenay's great good fortune. How happy he looks!" (Devin was scowling like a satyr.) "We must leave you to yourselves. Come, Alexandre, bid mademoiselle good-bye."

M. de Lameth ceremoniously bowed over the young girl's extended hand.

"Au revoir, mademoiselle."

"Au revoir, monsieur."

They both at that moment hated the bonds of convention.

CHAPTER III

IN 1785 life spelled amusement.

Térézia found herself on her first arrival in Paris, that is to say three years before her engagement, in her element. She had a glorious time. You can be sure when she walked abroad, demurely beside fat mamma, she attracted considerable attention. Who was she? Where did she come from? What youth, what brilliancy, what possibilities!

With her sleepy half-veiled eyes she was not slow in returning the inquisitive inquiring male glances which met hers with frank admiration. She was so tall, so gold and white, with a touch of carmine here and there in the right places. She carried herself with self-assurance. Undoubtedly a young lady of distinguished family? (Yes, undoubtedly.)

First of all she was made "presentable." Madame Carrabus was only too anxious to strike a note of extreme elegance. From morning till noon, and from noon till evening the ladies spent their time shopping, buying hats and trying on dresses. The dressmakers, assured of M. de Carrabus' inexhaustible resources (in Spain), were only too anxious to please their clients, and, as a consideration, raised their prices.

Marie-Antoinette, born of thrifty bourgeois parents, was horrified with a true Frenchwoman's horror of extravagance. Poor dear Marie-Antoinette! She would have loved to contrive and save, and make two lumps of sugar do for three—that was her nature—but fate had willed it otherwise. With a heavy reticule on her arm, containing gold, scent, cosmetics and chocolate, she wended her way through the fashionable streets of Paris, perspiring, and a spendthrift!

Térédia had not inherited her worthy mother's nature. She did not mind spending money. She thought it undignified of mamma to inquire the cost of an article before purchasing it. She blushed when mamma gasped at the price, clutching her reticule tighter than ever. "Paris is a nest of thieves," said mamma.

"We are rich," said Térédia with unanswerable truth. "Why make a fuss? Besides, that little gown suits me to perfection."

When duly dressed our débutante was introduced in a certain set—alas, Madame de Boisgaloup's acquaintances did not include the *haute noblesse*, but she knew very nice people indeed,—distinguished, charming, witty, good-looking. Marie-Antoinette every Sunday with praiseworthy regularity wrote a budget of news to her husband, who was detained by pressure of business in Madrid.

Carrabus smiled when he received these naïve epistles. The only thing which really delighted him was Térédia's personal success. He impressed on his wife that she must remember the girl's youth, and above all give attention to the proper finishing of her education. "Knowledge is of incredible importance" (he wrote). "Not when you are beautiful" (she answered in return), which was rather sage philosophy from the pen of a good-natured fool. The great Carrabus, with all his scintillating gifts of mind and speech, was very pleased to applaud his wife's wit. True, he wasn't often called upon to exert himself.

Span those full years, those much exposed, much be-written years—1785-1791—what do they not represent of audacity and excitement, bloodshed and horror, and sheer brutal vitality? A pity they have been run to death for our purpose. Who can hope to throw a new light on such a well-worn topic?

And yet here is our scheme—to show you the expected from Térédia's point of view (and she was always in the limelight), to show you a living, breathing, actual woman—precocious, a devil undoubtedly, but a creature of swift transitions, great energy, and undeniable looks. Look at

her career—dipping from the commonplace to sordidness—from sordidness to theatrical sublimity, “Notre Dame de Septembre,” “Notre Dame de Directoire,” and slipping off to dull and princely respectability after a long life of debauchery.

It is giving the plot away with a vengeance and maybe hunting you off the track? Who knows what lies before us? Anyhow, such as it is, the story has to be written—for the greater part as it happened. Truth carries her own flag.

Térézia never forgot her first impressions of Paris. She had leaned as far as she could out of the dusty traveling carriage to gain a glimpse of all the wonders.

Paris was a far gayer, far brighter city than Madrid. And yes, it didn't smell nearly as evilly. She found the Rue St. Honoré most imposing—the shops, the pedestrians, even the beggars came in for a due share of notice. In default of her sleepy mamma's attention, she had to address her ecstatic remarks to Christina, who sat facing her ladies, holding on to a valise—probably containing madame's diamonds, or madame's sugar cakes.

Christina had been born in the Rue du Bac thirty-five years ago. She knew Paris. She could (an' she would) have pointed out the chief sights to her young lady (she'd nursed her from a baby). But Christina was, as she expressed it, shaken to her marrow by the infernal jolting of the lumbering vehicle. She was tired and cross, and to all Térézia's eager questions she answered in toneless monosyllables.

“I'll bite your head off if you don't tell me what that is,” the young beauty cried, shaking Christina's arm.

“What could it be, mam'selle, but the palace of the king?”

“Do you think he is there now?”

“I don't know.”

“What a quaint bridge all covered with shops, little tiny shops. Do you hear them fighting? Look at that man; why, he is as black as ink and nearly naked. Chris-

tina, he will kill someone with that pole!" Térézia shut her eyes. "Are we safely over?" she asked presently.

"Yes," said Christina in the same dull voice.

They left fashionable Paris behind them, and, even as the sun dipped in the muddy Seine, they drew up with a jerk, which effectually woke Marie-Antoinette, in front of a tall gray house on the Quai St. Louis.

Pedro, the footman, rang a hoarse-throated bell. The great iron gates of the courtyard swung back.

The gatekeeper's wife, a homely woman dressed in deepest black, curtsied to the ladies.

Over the front door waved a bale of black dull cloth, surrounding two wax lights in dim lanterns, which gleamed ineffectually in the rays of the setting sun.

Térézia looked around her fearfully, as she followed mamma out of the carriage into the entrance hall, which was narrow, gloomy and also draped in black.

"*Tiens!* the great misfortune," said Marie-Antoinette. "Who is dead?"

The major-domo, old and silver-haired, let his stave rattle on the stone flooring.

"The master, Monsieur de Boisgaloup," he replied.

Marie-Antoinette, who was vainly trying to order her hair and arrange her veil, exclaimed anxiously: "My husband wrote making his arrangements. We were to accept the hospitality of his old friend. I wouldn't inconvenience madame for worlds! Tell us, good man, the name of a decent inn. Stop the carriage! Christina—see, the idiots are unstrapping the luggage. We cannot in decency stay here." At last she had her veil free and revealed her heated, worried face. "Paris is as hot as an oven," she said. "Oo-uff, for a glass of iced water!"

Before the old servant could answer, a little lady—spare as a robin, dark, vivacious, dressed in deep widow's weeds, with an enormous white lawn tippet and cuffs to match—flung herself into Marie-Antoinette's arms.

"Welcome," she gasped. "Welcome."

The ladies kissed each other.

Marie-Antoinette overflowed with condolences and ejaculations. She would not derange dear Louise. What a tragedy—only ill seven days? and (comparatively) such a young man; handsome and charming!

“He was fat—too fat,” said Madame de Boisgaloup. “The heat carried him off, the heat and dysentery. He grieved not to be able to meet you. He charged me with all manner of messages.”

“It tears my heart,” said Marie-Antoinette; ever a facile weeper, she let her tears rain on the smooth muslin bosom of the little widow. “You have children?”

“Two boys, great big boys; they must make friends with your little girl.”

Madame de Boisgaloup searched the dim hall with her sharp little eyes. She almost laughed, so great was her astonishment, when she discovered Térézia. “You never prepared me for this,” she said. “She might well be seventeen, a marriageable young lady, and I was expecting a child to pet and hold in my empty arms.”

She gave a hand to each of her guests. “You must be tired and you will want to see your rooms, and you, my great big girl, must go to bed at once. How old are you?”

“Twelve years, madame.”

“Mon Dieu! And she towers over me.”

She led them into a big prim salon with three tall windows facing the river. To the left were the congested buildings of the Île St. Louis and the exquisite spiral of the Sainte Chapelle.

The Boisgaloups lived in the oldest quarter of the town.

The light was fairly good in the big room in spite of its somber hangings. The family portraits were shrouded in black cloth, and all the furniture was covered in white linen sheeting, to match the calico-hung walls.

Térézia shivered. The room struck damp and cold with an indescribable odor of withered flowers, wax lights and death.

“There stood his coffin. My poor Antoine was only buried yesterday. His funeral oration was magnificent

and cost me a hundred *livres* in doles to the poor, exclusive of the masses for his soul and a thousand incidental expenses. I have spared no money. I even called in the king's physician, and his fee is enormous. He could do nothing but shake his head and approve of Jordain's treatment. And my poor Antoine groaned. It is horrible to watch suffering, horrible. When they told me he was dead I praised God."

"I share your feelings," said Marie-Antoinette, sitting down precisely in the middle of the long hard settee under the defunct gentleman's portrait. He was portrayed wearing his legal robes and looked highly important. On either side of him hung two charming portraits.

Térédia stared at these pictures, and wondered if the young girl in a pink hooped skirt, wearing her natural brown curls, with rosy lips and dimpled cheeks, could be her hostess. Térédia's relentless young eyes noticed Madame de Boisgaloup's withered, lemon-tinted skin, brought into sharp contrast by her hideous black head-dress (which completely enveloped her hair), and the stiff muslin kerchief pinned by a mourning brooch—two cross-bones and a skull framed in dull ebony—placed exactly beneath her pointed chin.

It was Térédia's first introduction to death. She shivered again. She felt quite sure M. de Boisgaloup ought to have died a month earlier or a month later. He had behaved with no consideration for his Spanish guests.

Térédia made big eyes at her mother, who was reveling in the details of the deceased gentleman's illness. The little widow, who had seated herself beside her visitor, possessed herself of one of her large white hands and while gently stroking it poured out, in an unbroken stream, her information. Marie-Antoinette continually nodded her head. At last Térédia felt convinced that either it or her insecure bonnet must come off.

Térédia was also convinced that grown-up people, particularly elderly ladies, were very tiresome.

She walked over to the window. She longed to open it,

but didn't dare. The atmosphere was stifling. Where were the boys, she wondered? And where was she going to sleep? She hoped she would be given a proper bed. She hated lying anyhow on a sitting-room sofa and being obliged to get up and dress early in the morning . . . she would *insist* on a bed, she would stir up heaven and earth until a bed was provided for her. Her legs ached. They had been cramped in the carriage with all mamma's packages and parcels.

Marie-Antoinette remembered that she was dusty, tired and hot. An overwhelming thirst possessed her. As dear Louise was counting the funeral wreaths, and the names of the distinguished guests who had attended the funeral banquet, she wetted her lips with her tongue and exclaimed, "Christina has a wonderful recipe for lemonade: two lemons, a dash of sherry, a thimbleful of any sweet liqueur handy, half-a-dozen crystallized cherries, two bay leaves and *iced water*." The last words were spoken with great emphasis.

Her hostess immediately took the hint (stiffly).

"Térédia," she exclaimed. "There is the bell-rope—to the left, child—mind my best Sèvres vase. *Ciel*—a touch is sufficient!"

A loud sonorous peal sounded throughout the house. Térédia had pulled the bell-rope with a vengeance! She was burning for action. She wouldn't have minded in the least if Madame de Boisgaloup's cherished vase had been knocked to pieces. In the face of such a deplorable accident the ladies must have interrupted their gruesome conversation. Who cared a straw about the horrid old man's symptoms and his nasty illness? It made her feel sick to listen to them. He was much better dead.

Presently, refreshed by a cup of cold water, served with strawberry juice, and a moderate supply of wafer biscuits, Marie-Antoinette allowed herself to be conducted to her apartments.

Térédia followed on tiptoe, all excitement to know where she was to sleep . . . she would insist on a bed . . .

Marie-Antoinette had told her that little girls, when paying visits, slept anywhere, where most convenient; they were given a pillow and a quilt—*bon Dieu*, they could choose for themselves a sofa (if vacant) or they could lie on the floor or on three chairs, or on the linen chest, in the wood-box—*tiens*, little girls slept anywhere. . . .

Térédia, after receiving this valuable information one day during their interminable drive, had remained quite silent. Well, anyhow she would marry at her first opportunity. According to mamma, married ladies were given the luxury of beds, and sheets and fine lace and satin quilts and dear little gilt Cupids to hold back the silk bed draperies. To gain such grace Térédia felt herself willing to marry the ugly postilion who had lost one eye and who squinted villainously with the one left him.

Marie-Antoinette had laughed at her daughter's airs and graces. She had said she was altogether too fastidious—the next thing she would demand would be scented baths and toilet powder, and jewels and her box at the opera. What were young girls coming to? It was not seemly.

Marie-Antoinette preached her homily to deaf ears. Mamma was hopelessly old-fashioned. Térédia had shaken her splendid plaits with a contemptuous toss of her head. Youth stands for much in the eyes of youth. . . .

Madame de Boisgaloup's best spare room was quite a fine apartment. Yes, a splendid bed, carved white and gilt wood, green brocade panels and curtains to match; a lovely suite of modern furniture (Louis XVI.), a bureau supplied with an oval toilet mirror set in silver, and, in one corner, a commode with a china basin—the size of a small rose-bowl—and a ewer to match.

"How charming," said Marie-Antoinette. "And even flowers." Against the white paneled walls Madame de Boisgaloup had set a big jardinière of white roses and red carnations.

"I thought you'd like them, dear Marie-Antoinette," said the widow, applying her enormous handkerchief to

her bright little eyes. "They arrived this morning with M. de Listenay's compliments. He has such taste. They were intended for my poor dear Antoine. He'd mistaken the day. The cemetery is such a long way off, and I thought you would appreciate them better than he could. You must see M. de Listenay's famous gardens. They say the queen envies him."

"Thank you," murmured Marie-Antoinette. "I appreciate the warmth of your heart. Térézia, thank madame for her great kindness."

Térézia curtsied.

Madame de Boisgaloup clasped her hands together, having first folded her handkerchief, and replaced it in her pocket. "Take off your hat, child," she said.

Térézia obeyed her.

"And your pelerine. We haven't worn these things for five years in Paris."

Marie-Antoinette blushed more hotly than ever. Of all things to be accused of being unfashionable! Sorrow had made the estimable Louise bitter. They would soon rectify their wardrobes. M. Carrabus had supplied them with a substantial sum of ready money and a munificent letter of credit.

She looked at her young daughter dressed in her flowered, hooped satin dress of richest brocade; noted her lace under-sleeves, her immaculate throat and her sulky expression. The little one looked tired.

"All is light and air in Paris," said the widow. "The thinnest of silks and taffetas are worn; Chinese crêpes and English muslins; the queen has set a fashion of expensive simplicity. A shower will ruin a costly dress in a few moments. The dressmakers are doing a wonderful trade. Thanks to the genius of dear M. Calonne—he is longing to make your acquaintance—we are again rich in France, incomparably rich! Calonne is a veritable conjurer. My dear, he arrived in the nick of time. There were stories about—terrible stories—people dying of starvation——"

"God help them!" murmured Marie-Antoinette.

"Menacing the king's majesty, insulting the nobles. And the nobles themselves are at their wits' end for adequate supplies. They have had, in a great many cases, to sell their personal effects, their silver, their jewels, and they have parted with their daughters for next to nothing. If you cannot provide a *dot* you cannot expect a match, you must take what offers. Incredible stories——" She paused for breath. "But you must be tired—I will leave you, dear Marie-Antoinette. Supper will be ready at ten o'clock."

"You are too kind," said Marie-Antoinette, conducting her friend to the door, who whispered in her ear, "My congratulations. She is lovely. It is a thousand pities my mourning prevents me from introducing her into society. It would have been such a pleasure. Twelve! Impossible!"

"Térézia is well grown for her age," said Marie-Antoinette with placid satisfaction. "I married at fifteen."

"That is over-young. No girl ought to marry before sixteen."

"Térézia will marry long before that, and to tell you the truth" (she lowered her voice), "I will not hinder the child from making a suitable marriage. She is terribly headstrong and already gives me untold anxiety. Every man who sees her loves her."

"And she?"

"She returns their love—up to a certain point, of course."

"My poor friend!"

Madame de Boisgaloup blew a kiss through the chink of the door. "Au revoir, mes chères amies."

Hardly had she closed the door before Térézia, on the point of bursting into tears, called, in suffocating accents, "Christina! Where are you, Christina?"

A tiny door in the paneling opened unexpectedly. Christina ran hurriedly towards her nursling. "What is it, precious?" Her tone was all anxiety, all sympathy.

"Where am I to sleep, Christina?" sobbed Térézia. "I

won't sleep in the same bed as mamma. She always rolls on me——”

“There, there,” said Christina. “Come, I will show you. It is a lovely little virgin bower, and when I get the window opened it will smell as fresh as a May morning.”

Térédia quickly followed the maid through the little paneled door and found herself in a good-sized cupboard, arranged with hooks and wide shelves. Right at the top was a tiny dormer window hung with a little home-spun blind of coarse red and white linen. The top shelf was supplied with a mattress and a pillow.

“Is it a bed?” asked Térédia doubtfully.

“What else?” said Christina stoutly. “And a very comfortable bed, too.”

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTINA was well aware of her young lady's "goings on." She knew why her mistress, after four months' residence under the roof of Madame Boisgaloup, took a cordial farewell of her friend, and installed herself in her own *appartement*. There had been friction on both sides, tears, reproaches, vows, forgiveness (and broken promises galore from Térézia). Georges Boisgaloup had at sight fallen head over ears in love with the brilliant blonde, which was but natural. His younger brother was not slow in contracting the fever, and their rivalry gave infinite delight to Térézia. The bright-eyed widow at last discovered a very apparent situation. She scolded every inmate of her household. The lovers were obliged to meet by stealth, which only added to their delight. Christina knew and held her tongue, and pulled her young lady's hair mercilessly at night. Térézia didn't care. Out she crept to the back garden on every plausible excuse. She liked both brothers impartially, and it was heaven to kiss by moonlight and whisper in terrified accents of the future. . . .

Madame de Boisgaloup told Marie-Antoinette her true opinion of her lovely daughter. "She ought to be kept under lock and key," said she.

"Indeed, yes," said Marie-Antoinette. "Didn't I tell you the very first evening that she's a handful?"

"More than a handful," said dear Louise.

The docile Térézia was whisked to society functions "to distract her and give her new impressions." She was like wax. The Duc de Listenay—the gentleman who had sent her a basket of white roses and carnations by a somewhat unusual channel—fell an easy victim to her charms. He was rich and charming, but beyond allowing him to make

his intentions extremely plain, Térézia would have none of him—he was too obvious. She recalled her youth. She was too young for an engagement. Mamma agreed. Widow Boisgaloup had a different opinion.

The upshot of this disagreement was that the ladies decided to set up their own establishment. “God bless you, dear friend,” said Louise, heaving a sigh of relief as she watched the gorgeous new coach of the Carrabus’ roll down the ill-paved street.

Térézia very gracefully waved her hand to the widow, now less funereal. She had discarded the “weepers” from her head in favor of a lace head-dress including two lace lappets which fluttered gently in the early morning breeze. Marie-Antoinette was busy drying her eyes. Christina, facing her ladies, kept her eyes piously fixed on the slender spire of the Sainte Chapelle.

They moved into rooms befitting their station—you may be sure as fine and ornate as money could procure. Térézia—that forward, precocious minx—had insisted on having not only a bed to herself, but also a bedroom!

She delighted herself in furnishing it according to her own taste. The bed—narrow and white as befitted a *jeune fille*—was nevertheless a decorative object in a room all decoration. I wish you could have seen Térézia’s bedroom—she occupied it only for a year and a month or so—the very walls were garlanded with hand-painted roses, and fat little Cupids smiled from a lofty and exceedingly blue ceiling. The tall windows were draped with lace curtains festooned with dashing rosettes of rose satin ribbon; on the toilette table, *en suite*, there glittered a whole regiment of glass bottles and various toilet implements and painted sachets and silver-gilt brushes. Close to her bed, on its own little pedestal, there was a Sèvres lady in painted china—she sat by a table, fast asleep, her little red-slippered feet peeping beneath a froth of china lace; her generously-displayed bosom rising from another fall of lace which partly concealed a tiny letter. It was a charming little piece.

The carpet, which almost covered the parquet floor, was as pink as a flowering May tree, woven in one piece with a medallion centre. The sofas and chairs were of gilded cane, with masses of cushions stuffed with down and covered with ivory satin, a tone darker than the creamy walls. There were brackets on the walls, holding Térézia's select library, and Térézia's souvenirs, and Térézia's collection of fans; a jardinière filled with flowering plants; and a work-table—a gem—stuffed with rainbow silks and cobweb muslins and thin bright needles and a tiny thimble and a pair of scissors, sharp as anything. Térézia never used her *coquet* work-table; it was there to impress her female friends.

Of course she received in her bedroom, and she drank her morning chocolate in bed, raising herself on one dimpled elbow, smiling up at the “darling Cupid” (richly gilt) festooning her lace bed-curtains which were lined with shell-pink muslin. Having finished her chocolate, she would stretch her long fair limbs under the cosy warmth of her pink satin quilt, and maybe play with the edge of her real-lace edged sheet. She was lazy, was Térézia. Often and often Christina would whip like a thunderstorm into her young lady's highly-perfumed chamber and rout her out of bed. “You will get as fat as a pig,” she would menace.

And Térézia, flushed, warm, indescribably lovely, would seek her absurd little slippers in no time. She did not want “to get fat.”

A year later, papa, the great financier, arrived in Paris. Térézia met him in a wonderful new dress, swept him a curtsy of truly regal magnificence, had her hair confined to her classic head by two gold daggers, and looked, in short, the perfection of budding womanhood. Papa was immensely pleased. He had had a trying business year. His blue bills still fluttered, but the storm was practically over, the storm of adulation and envy. Only malice survived. His Spanish majesty, backed by some of his chief

advisers, was asking questions. M. de Carrabus was seriously displeased with his Spanish majesty. Even kings can ask too much, and he (Carrabus) had worked so hard to please everybody.

It was indeed a pleasant relaxation to forget vexatious state problems and babble nonsense with his delightful daughter. (He'd see she'd get her *dot* safe and sound out of the débâcle.)

He had not been a day in Paris before he had interviewed his bankers and arranged matters to his satisfaction.

Had Térézia been quite a good little girl during his absence, attended to her lessons, been early to bed and early to rise? To all these paternal questions Térézia replied in the affirmative, with her engaging yet vastly dishonest smile.

Only Christina, the humble watch-dog Christina, knew "mam'selle" was telling dear papa a pack of falsehoods.

The time in Paris had certainly not passed as tranquilly for Térézia as Carrabus had been given to understand. . . . "It is impossible to keep our daughter always at her tasks. I permit her now and again the relaxation of the society agreeable to her. She is fond of dancing and making new acquaintances, and she had a most flattering reception. . . ." So wrote Marie-Antoinette in her stiff, stilted French.

Papa couldn't help admiring his daughter's charming taste and charming room (it was an *interieur* to please the most fastidious), but he would have preferred greater simplicity. He did not want his girl spoiled. Mamma raised her meek hands at this:—"She spoils herself," said she. Another word of wisdom from the mouth of a fool.

Papa heard all the news, interviewed some of Térézia's admirers, administered his parental authority, insisted on obedience, religion and love, and considered that money and rank were worth attention from a matrimonial point of view.

Then his own affairs called him back to troublesome

Spain. His last evening in Paris was melancholy. Marie-Antoinette wept. Térézia clasped her father's neck with such protesting vigor that he was nigh to choking.

"I love you, papa," she murmured. "Stay and take care of your own Térézia." He gently parted the too ardent arms—they were bare and round and firm as marble. "It cannot be, my darling. Live well—take care of yourself," he said hoarsely.

Blind, blind papa! Such needless advice to daughter Térézia.

She flung herself at his feet in a pose of ravishing grace—as M. de Fontenay would say—and murmured that if papa left for Spain she'd die, die of sorrow and wounded affection.

He looked very concerned. Looking up sharply he discovered the placid Marie-Antoinette actually sniffing. "Stuff and nonsense," said Marie-Antoinette. "It will take more than that to kill our daughter."

"Our daughter"—in her ravishing attitude in her clinging makeshift robe—she was *en deshabille*—moaned like a little crushed dove, just a wee pipe, but nevertheless infinitely touching.

The great financier very properly scolded his wife.

"Take care of her," he said sternly. "She is of frailer stuff than you."

"God knows it," said Marie-Antoinette piously.

And here, rising to her full height—like an angel in a cloud of clinging white—Térézia moved across the carpeted floor and embraced her mother very ardently. "Father," she said, "I can trust her. She loves me, even as I love her. . . ." There was an irresistible glamor about the young girl. Marie-Antoinette beamed as a midday sun. "Enfin, que voulez-vous?" she said. "She has a heart of gold," and she returned her daughter's embrace warmly.

CHAPTER V

GEORGES DE BOISGALOUPE sat with his head in his hands, literally stunned. Térézia's letter fluttered at his feet. He was unconscious of the August heat, unconscious of time, unconscious of everything, except that Térézia was—married. If he had been on the spot this would never have happened! She had been forced against her will to marry an ogre—his beautiful princess, the only girl he would ever love! His life was over and done with . . . a fly tickled his nose, he whipped it passionately aside, another fly, hundreds of flies buzzed on the clouded window-panes, on the whitewashed walls, on the huge black slate, on the Doctor's pulpit, on his long black robe, hanging on a tarnished peg. It was insufferably close and hot, and the air was none too pure. Ventilation was undreamed of in the days prior to the Revolution. . . . How his thoughts chased each other—he remembered their first meeting—her shyness, her sweetness, her infinite variety . . . their first kiss . . . their last kiss . . . his mother's insensate anger and Térézia's surprising fortitude in the hour of peril. Then, as a menacing shadow, he saw his younger brother—she'd never wavered in her faith (he smiled wearily). He believed in her through thick and thin, in spite of much incriminating evidence he held to her stoutly—she could do no wrong . . . and then, owing to this hateful business of study, they had to part, to live on promises, to starve on hope—damned hope!

He bent down and picked up the scented missive. With trembling lips he deciphered her somewhat immature writing.

. . . “Georges, I am in despair, but circumstances beyond my control have hurried this marriage. I can truth-

fully say that in marrying M. de Fontenay I can give him both my Respect and Esteem, but as you know my heart is not in the matter. I will always love you. Think of T  r  zia kindly . . . and if we meet? No, no! under the circumstances it would be insupportable! My life is made; my heart is broken. Of what account is my poor beauty except that it has given you, my cherished friend, some pleasure? My appearance no longer satisfies me—I am weary of everything on earth. Let us suffer together and bravely face our Destiny.

“T  R  ZIA DE CARRABUS FONTENAY.”

The hot tears welled in Georges’ blue eyes. He had a fair and gentle appearance; slim and very tall, he gave one the impression of delicacy. In reality he was strong as steel.

He heard footsteps behind him. He rose hastily to his feet and met the half-cynical, half-sulky glance of his class-mate, Bonaparte. For some unknown reason he had taken a fancy to the thin, unpopular Corsican. There was something in the grip of his comrade’s hand which thrilled Georges. Napoleon was poor and underfed, and yet he got through more solid work than any other youth at the Academy. He never boasted of his endurance. He never opened his lips unless he was obliged to—there was something sinister about his appearance.

Bonaparte laid his hand on Georges’ shoulder.

“Take it calmly whatever it is,” he said, “and above all, try and conceal your feelings. You’ll never get on in the world if you don’t.”

“I don’t care what happens to me,” said Georges, brusquely.

Napoleon sat down astride a chair, and folded his arms across the back—under lowering brows he stared at Georges.

“Love is of no consequence at eighteen.”

The other started—“How dare you——”

“Why tell me? Your secret is no secret.”

"I'll make a clean breast of it." He opened his left hand and showed Napoleon a little crushed letter, written on tinted paper with violet ink; it was faintly reminiscent of the scent of violets. "I adore her. This is to tell me that she is married. A simple enough story, and I daresay you will be inclined to laugh. If so, kindly do it behind my back."

"I don't want to laugh. Why should I? All women are alike."

"Excuse me, you know nothing about the matter. This lady"—he tapped and carefully refolded Térézia's letter and placed it in his pocket-book—"is entirely original."

"Is she beautiful?"

Georges nodded.

"Is she young?"

Georges nodded.

"Witty?"

"Yes!"

"She returns your love?"

Georges bit his lips.

"And you tell me she is original! Why, my dear Boissgaloup, she is as old as Eve."

"Your reasoning wearies me. I ask you to respect my confidence."

"I never speak unnecessarily." He dropped his arms and stood erect—a lean little figure. There were dark shadows round his eyes. "You have occasionally stood my friend."

"That was nothing," said Boissgaloup, his fair skin reddening. "It is an infernal shame to make fun of you."

"It doesn't in the least affect me."

"No?"

"I am here to learn. I shall be able to retaliate presently. I have the instincts."

"Much good they do you!"

"Monsieur de Soissons is six foot three——"

The other smiled. "You won there. No one but I would back you against such odds."

"You are very kind."

"Don't be satirical. It is one of your worst traits. To tell you the truth, that is why the fellows don't like you. Whenever you can you ridicule them. You are clever enough to hurt them."

"You are very kind."

"There you are again! I'll have nothing to do with you! Fight your own battles." Georges put his hands in his pockets, and glared at the great window.

Bonaparte strode up and down the class-room. He kicked over a stool, and great was the clatter thereof. "If you knew how I despised all your little prejudices, and your insufferable arrogance," he said, coming to a standstill—his whole face aflame. "You are all as blind as bats. You see nothing, because you refuse to listen to reason. And the storm is coming. There will be a wild stampede one day and you will pray for your leader——"

"Ho, ho," sneered Boisgaloup, thoroughly aroused. "Why don't you come forward and apply for the situation?"

Bonaparte leaned over Georges. "I will," he said.

Boisgaloup bowed ironically. "I hope you'll condescend to offer me a post under you?"

"I will."

"A thousand thanks."

Bonaparte yawned. "Forgive my plain speaking. Your acting is the feeblest stuff I have ever seen. I believe in your real side. Even in this tragic love affair you have my warmest sympathy."

Boisgaloup lost all command of himself. He flung out his hand and rushed headlong out of the room.

Bonaparte looked after him. For two or three minutes he stood immovable as a stone image. Then he turned and walked over to his desk. When the class, summoned by the great bell, some two hours later, filed into the hall they found him poring over his books. Soissons spoke to him, and received nothing but a glassy stare. Another youth

humorously caught hold of his quill, and sent it spurting across in the direction of the learned Doctor's desk. "Wake up, old Methuselah!" he shouted in his ear. Napoleon opened his pen-box and searched for another pen.

The Doctor rapped his desk. "Silence, gentlemen!"

CHAPTER VI

WE have marched a year ahead. Much has happened, and the pot is still seething.

There is talk in high places; secret missions; secret assignations—even the queen has lost some of her tranquil dairymaid calm. She still plays at butter-making, but she frequently looks to the door . . . the door is locked. Admittance only on parole. Unnecessary precaution—a game *en plus*, so says the fat and tranquil Louis—he has a noble, yea, a kingly presence, but sometimes (even as she loves him) the queen doubts him—no, not him—his methods.

She has even tried to wake him up. “The times are bad—a little more energy, a spark more of royal contempt, of Bourbon pride, Louis; it would not hurt and it might help matters.” So speaks the queen.

His majesty smiles. In two strides he covers her private boudoir—a tiny place, all gilding, festoons, and mirrors—and the queen watches him narrowly in her looking-glass—he is administering justice to the dauphin; in make-belief wrath he asks the meaning of his royal highness’s impertinence? His royal highness laughs the louder; he is not afraid of the king.

“Is that as you would have it?” says Louis, floundering down on a tiny sofa and wiping his heated brow. “There is a storm brewing.” He taps his chest. “I can hardly breathe. Come here, you little vagabond! The king must be obeyed. . . . You see, your majesty, how they treat me?—it is worrying.”

He turns towards the queen who is busy writing at her little desk.

"What are you doing there, madame?"

"I am writing to my father."

"I beg of you to send him my greetings."

The queen looks up. There is the shadow of some awful calamity in her eyes.

The king perceives that she is not herself. He lumbers up from the sofa, crosses the room on tiptoe, and, bending down, he puts his arm around her neck. Then he pats her on the back with fatherly good-nature.

"Whatever happens we have each other and the children, and Madame Elizabeth. God is good."

The queen drops her little pen. She leans her proud head against her husband's shoulder and bursts into tears.

"It is the weather," he says consolingly, "only the weather. . . ."

For once his majesty was right. The weather broke that night in a pitiless hailstorm. Never in the memory of man had there been such a storm. In and round about Paris the damage done was frightful. It was the month of July, and the corn was ripening for harvest.

The fields were swept clean as if an army of locusts had passed over them—the proud grain was beaten and laid level with the earth. The storm broke over Paris at her gayest hour—just before midnight. . . . Hist! listen! Down poured the deluge and the wind piped high and heat-flashes (corn lightning) lit the blackened sky. One saw and yet one did not see. The gutters ran with water; children shrieked in terror, dishevelled women ran out on the streets peering here—peering there—where were their husbands in their hour of need? It was God's punishment. And the storm grew in fury; the hailstones rattled down the ill-paved streets—the gutters ran as rivers, and blue lightning lit the torrid sky. With it all a stifling, brooding, intolerable heat.

There were many homeless people in Paris that night, starving people who had wandered in from the great by-ways; there was no food in the country, and they were here to look for work, stalwart, patient men, and women

less patient. The women were the most blasphemous—wicked, obscene language floated over the heads of their hungry little ones. Work? Where could they find it?

Térédia was frightened. She lay trembling on her velvet couch, shutting her eyes.

The curtains were drawn, wax lights blazed on madame's toilet-table, and over madame's full-length dress mirror.

"Put them out," she commanded. "Where is Claire? If only Claire was here I would feel much safer."

The hail tore at the spacious gardens of the Château de Fontenay; delicate shrubs were literally plucked up by the roots and flung on high; on the slate roof of the castle the huge stones beat a merciless tattoo.

"I am frightened," moaned Térédia.

"Try and go to sleep," said Christina, who sat in one corner of the big room, by a shaded lamp, tranquilly button-holing a cambric jacket.

She looked older than of yore. Christina had passed through troubled waters. M. Carrabus' inability to keep in office (and his incidental flight) had surprised and pained her. Madame de Carrabus was no longer in Paris. Six months ago she had left France to join her husband. She had refused to take Christina with her. "Someone must stay behind and look after our daughter," she had said.

Christina sighed as she drew her needle in and out of the delicate fabric. Her eyes had grown very keen of late. She bitterly regretted this gift of sight. She had been given to understand—by many disgraceful circumstances—that Térédia was—well, not a model of all the virtues. It hurt Christina; she felt less pride in the marquise's beauty now she knew that it was allied to many paltry and ignoble traits of character. She had let her mother go, trembling, horrified—half realizing the bitterness of personal disgrace, but without the flimsiest pretence of grief. True, young madame had at the time been much taken up with a royal masquerade; she was one of the patronesses of the ball and had felt her responsibility. . . . And all the

love she protested—and all the love she wasted! If ever there was a stern old maid it was Christina. The spectacle of her mistress's unlicensed love affairs had taught her to hate men. They were all alike so she told herself—unworthy of an honest woman's respect. . . .

She kept her tongue in bounds by sheer force of habit. She had promised Marie-Antoinette to look after "her darling." . . . Christina smiled grimly and bit off her thread.

A baby's sobbing brought her instantly to her feet. Christina flung down her work and ran across the yielding carpet (all was luxury in madame's bedroom), and bent down, cooing, smiling, adoringly over an ornate cradle. The cradle was very gilt, very lacey, very pink (madame had made up her mind she would have a daughter, if only to bestow upon her the incomparable inheritance of beauty).

"The little wretch, he is always howling. Take him away," said Térézia, fretfully, half-turning on the sofa, and half-opening her eyes. "I was sleeping."

"My precious!" said Christina. She took up the baby and cuddled him close to her spare bosom.

"I wish he had been yours. Listen, Christina!" (the wind howled). "I know I shall go mad!" Térézia sat up and passed her hand across her dry eyes.

Christina, still holding the baby, walked over to his mother and put him down in her lap.

He was not a beautiful specimen; wizened, with great big reproachful eyes. Térézia had not treated him well. Prior to his birth it had been impossible for her to remember her condition—and then—ugh, wasn't he his father's child? Térézia on the very day of his birth—a month ago—had detected a similarity of expression. And though the poor little mite had been born with a crop of dense black hair, he had already begun to grow down of a reddish tint. "Every day he grows more ugly—more repellent." Térézia never minced her words. Women of her disposition revel in adjectives. When she was happy she

was "gloriously happy," when unhappy (a frequent state of affairs) "there was no more miserable wretch in the kingdom." The two states knew no intermediate line. Like her beauty her mood was flamingly apparent.

Maternity suited Madame la marquise de Fontenay (old Ravoral had breathed a sigh of relief when he'd paid her his first visit of congratulation). She had risen from her confinement with a skin of such dazzling purity and eyes of such extraordinary brilliancy that her very physical perfection astounded her friends.

Térézia touched the baby. He had stopped crying and was smiling as if half realizing a rare treat.

"Poor little thing," she said. "How funny it seems to be so tiny. Look at his hands" (she uncurled his fingers), "they are really rather sweet."

Christina beamed.

"You'll grow to love him yet."

"Christina, you are an old fool. Why will you believe in me?"

"For old times' sake."

The girl-mother nodded and tickled her son's neck. "Once upon a time I was a dear little girl," she told him, "so obedient (was I ever obedient, Christina?), so prim, so painstaking. Here, take him, Christina—he is so hot. Don't look like a thunder-cloud. Ai! there is something struck!" She jumped to her feet, flew across the room and pushed back the heavy curtains. "I can't see anything. It is horribly dark."

A vivid sheet of lightning played above the dense woods; in an instant and for an instant the whole grounds were lit up. Across the courtyard clattered a pair of horsemen—darkness.

Térézia had, however, glimpsed M. de Fontenay. "It serves him right," she said. "Won't he be in a rage! He is as frightened of water as a cat. I expect they are drenched to the bone. I hope he will stay in bed and let Charles cosset him, and you can brew him one of your famous drinks—as long as I don't see him. Christina . . .

Christina! I refuse to be left alone! Where are you going to?"

"It is time for his milk. Charlotte! Charlotte!" She went through the big door calling for "that lazy baggage—the wet nurse. . . ."

Of course the women were bound to quarrel. Christina was ludicrously jealous of Charlotte's enormous privileges. It rather amused Térézia—that is to say when she was utterly at a loss for amusement.

Now she stood listening, one finger to her lips. She was thinking hard. Then she smiled. "I'll chance it," she said. "Life is too horribly dull—I adore thrills and excitement, and why, to please one man's insensate temper, should I shut myself up as a hermit? I have given him a son. My conscience is perfectly *en règle*—I can afford my little pleasures . . . mon très cher Adolf."

She seated herself at her pretty writing-table and feverishly scribbled a note, presumably to her "très cher Adolf."

Her heart beat rapidly. She felt intensely alive. The little letter, which she presently addressed in a careful hand, was packed full with lies and passion. She wrote a very good love-letter considering she only worked from imagination.

She lay down presently on her *chaise longue*—face downwards on the little soft feather pillow, sprinkled with violet perfume. Her long limbs were stretched in slothful repose. With a gentle beat of her finger-tips she made her calculations—if no untoward incident occurred she was as safe as *le petit Georges* . . . she passed her tongue over splendid lips . . . until to-morrow was a whole eternity.

Suddenly as it had begun, the hailstorm ceased.

Térézia fell fast asleep. And the little note, which she had so artistically penned, inconsiderately slipped from her hand to the floor.

Monsieur *le mari*—half out of a sense of duty and half out of suspicion—as soon as he had donned dry clothes and drunk a cup of *bouillon*, knocked at madame's door; get-

ting no answer, he boldly entered the room, walking, in his comfortable velvet slippers, as noiselessly as a cat across the floor. He stopped by madame's couch, and watched her flushed face, the smile of her half-opened "rosebud" mouth. (He did not flatter himself that she was dreaming agreeably of her "great big tyrant.") By chance his eyes fell away from madame's enchantingly rounded elbow to the side of the sofa; noticing a letter on the floor, he picked it up; he looked at it, and pocketed it. Then, silently as he had entered, monsieur made his departure.

Térédia, needless to say, when she discovered her loss and her "indescribable folly," worked herself up into a state of feverish excitement.

Practical Christina soothed her as well as she might.

"It is very late, long past midnight. Nothing can be done to-night. Just you go to sleep, like a dear child. The angels will watch over you."

"Nonsense! What do I care about the angels? You must make inquiries at once."

"And awaken suspicion?"

"Find out who has stolen my letter. It's is positively indecent the way I am treated in my own house! I am surrounded by spies, by enemies—by monsieur's inflexible hatred. He hates me! It is his only joy to cause me pain."

Christina threw back the sheets on the great bed. Then she took forcible hold of the excited marchioness (aged just sixteen), and with considerable muscular power assisted her into bed. "I won't answer a single question," she said sternly. "I'll never help you again as long as you live if you don't do as I tell you. Take it calmly, madame."

Térédia, looking very dejected, said Christina was a brute, and that she truly and honestly disliked her, and that she had long suspected her of being heartless.

Christina meanwhile was quietly folding her mistress's clothes and putting the room in order.

Térédia sat up in bed. "You are not even listening to me. It is the very height of insolence! I will make my

arrangements. M. de Lameth will protect me. He adores me."

"When will you realize the folly of putting pen to paper?" Christina blew out the lights on the dressing-table.

"What do you mean?"

"There may be a duel."

"A duel! A duel! M. de Fontenay can storm and back-bite and kick up fearful rows, but he'd never hazard an honest fight. I know my man."

"After all, madame, he is a gentleman."

"Come here, Christina, and I will tell you something which I always meant to keep to myself because I am so ashamed of the whole disgraceful affair. Nearer. I am not going to shout."

Christina bent over her and buttoned madame's fragile nightdress. "What is it?"

"Such a scandal. So much for his boasted lineage!" (she snapped her fingers). "You remember the story of his family jewels?"

"Yes, madame."

"You are not in a witness-box, or in a church. Don't be so stiff, Christina. I am sorry I was nasty just now. You are not a brute, really. Forgive me."

"There, there, my precious. I would do anything in the world for you, if you would only be good."

"I promise faithfully——"

Christina sighed and regarded her "little baby" with an exquisite and rare smile. After all, why should she condemn her, sinful as she was? Youth and beauty have their privileges.

Térédia fondled the faithful creature's hand. "It is all a fraud," she said. "He is only a mushroom marquis—the son of a low tradesman, and the grandson of a lacquey. He bought the title, he bought the jewels, he bought me!" She nodded her head. "It is every bit true. Isn't it awful? Christina, dear Christina, you'll send a message to M. Longueville? He is my only friend. I can trust him.

He respects me, and he's very sorry for my abominable position. Though I knew nothing, it was an open secret at the time of our marriage. And how he boasted, and mamma too, of his splendid position and fortune. I don't believe he has even got money. I am sure he is crippled by debts; or else he is the meanest monster alive. Is it any wonder I despise and hate him? I am so young."

Christina bit her lips and scowled. "I always felt there was something wrong. You will be revenged yet. Take my word for it."

"How?"

"How can I say? I am no sorceress."

"I wish you were; then you could turn him into a tadpole and drown him comfortably in the pond, and no one would accuse you of murder. If a man behaves as a toad, why shouldn't he be treated as a toad? Monsieur de Fontenay has behaved infamously."

"Who has told you all this?"

"Monsieur de Ravoral."

"Just like his impertinence. Can't he mind his own business?"

"He knew we were always quarrelling."

"A fine way of making peace."

"He acted for the best. I have a clear case against monsieur le marquis; I'll divorce him for incompatibility of temper." (She yawned.) "I am awfully sleepy. Good night, dear Christina. I feel much calmer. Get word to Monsieur Longueville, and I will forgive everything." She banged at her pillow—"It is hard." (Christina shook it.) "That is better. Of course, when I was asleep Devin crept into the room and stole my letter. That is perfectly clear. He'll have no scruples about reading it." She laughed heartily. "Oh, Christina, it is *such* a letter! I expect his hair will be green to-morrow—Christina?—"

"Go to sleep."

"In a minute. Is the door bolted to the passage?"

"Yes."

"To the nursery?"

"No."

"Then for mercy's sake lock it carefully. There is murder in the air."

"Good-night."

"Good-night. . . . How I wish I had Adolf here to protect me . . ." she called drowsily.

"The idea!" snapped Christina.

CHAPTER VII

MID-DAY—a week later. Monsieur de Fontenay is standing very erect by the ornate chimney-piece in his own magnificent salon. On her knees Térézia — Térézia very smart in an “adorable costume” (to quote herself), white organdie muslin, patterned with tiny pink rosebuds, over a white satin slip; a wide sash of blue silk, touching her little high-heeled, buckled shoes; her hair arranged in a profusion of curls, golden, perfumed, glistening; on her wrist, dangling by blue ribbons, to match her sash, a wide Leghorn hat trimmed with shaded pink roses—in her eyes a mutinous and yet imploring expression.

“ . . . See, I kneel to you,” she said. “I ask your pardon—only let me out! For one week I have suffered excruciating agony. I feel I am dying. For one week you have kept me literally behind lock and key and made the most frightful insinuations against my character. In reality there lives no better woman in France.”

Térézia ended her speech, and raised imploring eyes to the ornate ceiling. Then she sighed profoundly—doubled up as it were (an extraordinarily pliant woman), she almost touched the floor with her golden curls, and let the “most adorable hat in Paris” trail in the dust. This last is but a figure of speech to represent Térézia’s incalculable self-pity—there was not a particle of dust in madame’s salon.

Flowers, pretty furniture, lovely pictures, a miniature library, a harp (of course), and an ivory and gold harpsichord—if only the spirit of harmony and love had reigned in this charming room, what an enviable frame it would have been for a pretty woman!

The fly in the ointment was very apparent. The fly in this case was red-headed, apoplectic and domineering, sneering—insufferably superior.

“No,” he said icily. “I am going to be master in my own house! As you cannot, madame, behave properly, you must be taught manners. I won’t be made the laughing-stock of all Paris.” Devin stroked his bristly moustache, and stamped his feet.

“I did no wrong. You yourself admit the letter was . . . (sobs) never . . . delivered.”

“Get up from the floor, and don’t whine. Who has paid for that dress? I married a pauper, the daughter of a common swindler——”

“You fiend!” She rose with surprising agility, sprang forward, and with her little hand wide outspread, she soundly boxed monsieur’s very visible ears.

Lord, a bully cannot stand a straight attack! Térézia’s heart contracted, at first, in terror at her dramatic effort and then leaped in bubbling delight at the effect of her action.

Monsieur collapsed like a spent bubble; he shivered.

“Don’t,” he said. “For mercy’s sake remember your dignity—and mine.” His teeth chattered.

The roses in Térézia’s cheeks matched the roses on her garlanded hat.

“You to lecture me,” she said slowly, towering over the little man. “I have long known the truth—of this, *par exemple*.” (She stroked a jeweled brooch set as a basket with different precious stones which she wore at her breast.) . . . “An heirloom once in the possession of Marie de Rohan—a brooch of great intrinsic worth, but of still greater sentimental value.” She turned and looked out of the great French window on to a high terrace—a wide sweep of landscape garden below, bathed in July sunshine. “And this old family estate, sacred to many memories——” She looked monsieur straight in the face. “Behold the owner of all this splendor—the *signeur* steeped in noble traditions—the representative of a famous

name—You see I remember. I really have quite a good memory.”

The blood receded from de Fontenay’s face. His eyes bulged, and his lips trembled. If his life had depended on it he could not have answered the beautiful, mocking creature.

“You made a fool of me,” she said calmly. “Had I loved you I would have been furious. As it happens it is for me a matter of complete indifference. I would have loathed you just as much had you been the son of a hundred heroes instead of the child of a sausage manufacturer. Marseilles, I believe? Sausages must have been popular—or haven’t you paid for the jewels and the château? Don’t tell me anything. In any case I wouldn’t believe you.”

“You may sneer, madame. My father was an honest citizen. His excellency, the Comte de Carrabus——”

“My father is a good man.”

“A fraudulent banker——”

“He created joy——”

“On the brink of a precipice——”

“Some of us are bound to go over. Papa had the misfortune to miscalculate his distance.”

“A common felon, madame.”

“Remember I am his daughter!”

“A disreputable——”

“The most beautiful woman in France! And I take it the saints forgive my behavior—nay, encourage it. It is their way of making amends for my deplorable marriage. . . .” She folded her hands very piously. “Have I not shown heavenly resignation to an unkind fate?” She leaned over towards him. “Now are we even,” she whispered, and touched him lightly on his arm. “Let me go my own way, and I will never breathe the word sausages again. I will wear the Rohan jewels in perfect good faith—I will, to my friends, speak kindly of my good-natured husband. . . . *Hein?* Is it a bargain, my great big tyrant?”

He stroked his moustache.

"It is all a lie——"

"I'll agree—on condition——"

"What do you want?"

Madame pointed her finger to a delightful carriage, which at that moment swept past the window, and dropped a deep curtsy. "I want monsieur's gracious permission to drive into Paris to meet my friends. Monsieur will remember that Madame Vigée Lebrun is at present engaged in painting my portrait—it is most important that the sittings are continued."

"On condition you return home to-night."

"I make no conditions."

"I won't have it!"

She drew on her soft kid glove, smoothing it carefully on her arm. "You can be quite at ease. I am staying with the Cardilacs. Claire insists on it. She is a great dear, is little Claire. I love her." She sighed. "It is a perfect day. I intend to have a lovely time. *Au revoir*, my dear Devin. Look after *le petit* Georges. He was crying for you last night."

He could not find words to answer her superb insolence.

He not only let her go, but he conducted her to her carriage—waving the grim Christina aside, and folding the rug about her delicate dress.

Térédia was in the seventh heaven of delight. She could not help beckoning Christina on the off-side of the carriage and whispering in her ear:

"He is a vile little toad and I have squashed him to jelly."

Christina scowled so ferociously at this remark that the very coachman, who happened to look round, almost dropped his reins. But Térédia laughed as an irrepressible, happy child:

"Partons!" she cried. "A l'avenir!"

CHAPTER VIII

FOR Térézia, engrossed by her own pleasant thoughts, the dusty drive into Paris passed rapidly enough.

She hardly glanced at the desolate fields or, for the matter of that, remembered the hail-storm which had done all the damage. The sun was shining; there was a delicious breeze—and she had triumphantly got her own way! Sufficient cause to drive away any melancholy thoughts.

Now and again with half-pitying contempt for their laziness she would glance at the pedestrians who, singly or in groups, were plodding towards Paris. They all looked repulsive; unwashed, with evil expressions. One or two women actually raised a fist and shook it at her pretty carriage, accompanying the unbecoming gesture with guttural and utterly unbecoming language. Happily Térézia didn't catch their remarks or understand their rude *patois*. Probably her coachman did; the nearer they approached the city the more he urged his gallant grays to their topmost speed. Térézia liked a good pace. She only laughed when the wheels of the carriage caught in an extra deep rut which nearly tossed her out on the dirty roadside. The carriage righted itself by a miracle; indeed the public roads were shockingly kept.

They entered Paris and drove to M. Cardillac's house, which was situated opposite the Bank of France.

Térézia, assisted by her little pocket mirror, adjusted a wind-blown curl, pulled at a ribbon and smoothed her very smooth cheeks with an infinitesimal wisp of cambric, dipped in some toilet unguent.

Pouff! The town smelled horrible! and what a lot of common people about! What wretches to walk calmly in the middle of the streets and hinder her progress!

Térédia snapped the lid of her dear little gilt *étui*, which contained her cooling lotion (an infallible remedy against sunburn and heat), and spoke to her coachman.

"Hurry," she said. "As it is I am late. Tell those people to get out of the way."

She in her turn shook her little jeweled fist (it was so hot she had taken off her gloves) at an excitable group of men and women standing stock-still in the middle of the street, stretching horribly thin and eager necks at an effigy, carried aloft by one of their members—a veritable giant he, with arms as of a bronzed Hercules.

The coachman had to pull up his horses. He shouted to the crowd—it shouted back at him, without budging an inch.

Térédia smiled at a man in the crowd—a stalwart peasant, almost good-looking in spite of his scowl. The youth stared back at the lady and spat on the ground. Térédia turned her charming head in another direction and met a sea of angry faces.

Suddenly the crowd leaped away as if at a given signal, howling and waving their trophies.

The dappled grays quivered.

The coachman, who had been very red in the face, turned an ugly sickly gray.

"Madame," he said, looking round. "It is best to return to Fontenay. Paris is not safe to-day."

Térédia looked up at him with superb scorn. "Do you think I am frightened by a set of hooligans? Drive on!"

The coachman whipped up his horses. There were many faces at the windows of the tall houses lining the narrow street. Nearly everyone glanced at Madame de Fontenay's splendid carriage. Here and there a shrill laugh rang out, or an unmistakable oath.

A burly tradesman, who had once sold Térédia a pair of silk stockings, and never forgotten the fact or the beauty of his customer, ran out of his shop door, after her carriage.

"Madame!" he called. "Madame!"

Térédia, recognizing the fellow, waved her hand and smiled.

"Bonjour, David," she called. "What a lovely day."

She was for passing on, but the hosier laid a detaining hand on the low carriage door and the coachman pulled up at once. (It gave him great pleasure to do so.)

"Have you not heard the news, madame la marquise?" panted the man. "There were riots last night. Lamoignon burned in effigy in the Place du Dauphin—for eighteen hours the people shouted and danced. Blood was shed to the accompaniment of fireworks. M. Necker's portrait was publicly insulted. May I advise you, madame——"

Térédia shook her head gently.

"They ought to be punished," she said. "What are the police thinking of? Thank you so much for telling me. . . . Drive on, Baptiste."

Baptiste galloped his horses down the empty street towards the Pont Neuf. By some miracle the angry crowds had dispersed. The hosier (good man) returned to his quaint little shop, cursing the folly of women.

On the famous bridge facing the equestrian statue of Henry IV., Térédia found herself in fresh difficulties. Her horses were peremptorily held up by a score or so of dirty hands. A score or so of dirty faces hemmed her dainty freshness. One man had the audacity to poke his ragged head under the hood of the carriage and to lay an indescribably dirty hand on madame's dainty shoulder.

"Madame is pleased to descend," he said. "Citizens, shall this pearl escape penance?"

"No!" roared the excited crowd. The women hedged close. A child howled and was not reprimanded. No one heard its shrill screams.

Térédia was hustled from her pretty carriage, far more annoyed than frightened, and conducted by the hooting, shouting, dancing mob, opposite a huge figure made of straw, surmounted by a grinning mask and a black wig. Before this ungainly effigy she was told to kneel, to fold her

hands, to back away and curtsy three times. The rules and regulations of the ceremony were very strict. Térézia, deeming resistance unpolitic and meaningless, did as she was told, and with such charming grace that even that graceless crowd of long-suffering humanity ceased to howl and continued to stare. Was the lady actually of their own flesh and blood?

A young girl, attenuated by want and suffering, stealthily drew near and slipped eager fingers across the blue freshness of Térézia's sash. She had never in all her life touched silk. . . .

In her cool drawing-room, behind carefully-closed blinds, Claire sat reading, awaiting the arrival of her friend.

Claire was absorbed in the romance of *Paul et Virginie*, by Saint-Pierre. The book had been very well received. Claire loved it and frequently wept over the pathetic passages . . . at times she would lay down the book and picture herself and her cousin in one or other of the poignant situations. For reasons which have nothing to do with this history, Claire was still in love and still unmarried. M. le cousin had business abroad, and his frequent love-letters were Claire's chief solace in life. One day . . . no, we will not allow ourselves to pry into a young girl's day-dreams, except to tell you that they were altogether rosy and altogether doomed to disappointment. Even in romances, such as Saint-Pierre's masterpiece, Fate hovers dim, unrecognizable, a secret agent—and how much more so in the inexorable scheme of existence?

Poor little tender Claire, who this afternoon was weaving yet another thread into her tapestry of dreams, how very little she understood the beginning of the end! In fact, when old Tourozel, the family retainer, had retailed with emphasis the business of these last days, and had explained the nature of the explosive (human) material huddled in the damp nether dens of Paris—smoldering

and catching heat by very physical contact—she had only sighed and had finished her dinner with a good appetite.

She was one of the many.

So few of us see the crack in the wall, but we all feel its collapse. . . .

Claire did not look an hour older or an hour wiser than when we last met her at Marie-Antoinette's dinner-party. She still believed in her dear Térézia, and considered her a much-maligned and injured young woman. She could not look at Devin de Fontenay, the actual cause of so much misery, without shivering. Oh, why had dear Térézia married him? She would have been so happy with . . . even Claire, faithful little Claire, found it difficult to name the gentleman. *Anyone* would have been preferable to a bully, a man of furious jealousy and low suspicions. Unconsciously Claire repeated Térézia's indictment. Dear Térézia had during the last year used up a vocabulary of poignant language to express, all too inadequately, the woes of married life.

Claire would sigh and soothe and sympathize on every occasion where her sympathy was demanded, and often acted as an unconscious intermediary in restoring her dear friend's shattered nerves. She realized that her own deep compassion couldn't always meet the case. There were other friends who had a right to administer comfort to the disillusioned bride. "Men were much kinder than women," Térézia would remark, "always with the exception of her incomparable Claire." And Claire never contradicted anyone willingly.

Presently Térézia burst into the cool drawing-room, a very whirlwind of excitement. She flung herself into the arms of her friend.

"I am so glad to see you. My dear! My dear!"

"What has happened?"

"I have been nearly killed."

"Térézia!"

"Or at least trampled on and insulted. Do look at my shoulder, I believe it is bruised. It is aching horribly."

"Never tell me Devin has dared to touch you!"

"No, no. That is another story. Darling, I have once and for always silenced M. de Fontenay. Aren't you sorry for me?" Térézia sank into a convenient chair. "I was too clever to move as much as an eyelash. I paid no regard to my dress. I knelt on the hard stones, surrounded by a gaping crowd. Bah!—how they smelled! Darling, I am hot! Lebrun will be in despair. She is just at the complexion, and no imagination can do justice to my skin. I must get cool." Térézia unloosened the strings of her garlanded hat.

Claire handed Térézia a charming fan, hand-painted on parchment.

"I don't understand," she said. "Have you had an accident?"

"An accident," she murmured. "She calls it an accident! Have you been out to-day?"

"No."

"Nor yesterday?"

"Yesterday I was helping in the still-room. Marie is ill——"

Térézia waved her hand. "Precious, what is the good of living in Paris? There is a riot in the town."

"That is very true, I remember. Tourozel was speaking yesterday of unseemly rabbles who parade the streets and who shout for no reason at all. It is very sad."

"Sad? It is shocking! One can't drive in one's own carriage without being molested by unspeakable ruffians. Why doesn't the king act?"

"I don't know."

"The government is to blame. The watch are hustled and flouted by lawless demons! Why don't they fill up the Bastille? A great big place like that going to waste! If I were a man I'd soon restore order."

"I wish something could be done," said Claire, kissing her friend.

Presently Térézia changed the conversation. She was not really interested in politics, and she was annoyed with

her majesty, who hadn't given her an appointment at court. Her majesty was apparently deeply engrossed in domestic affairs. Public festivities and state entertainments were rare in Paris in 1788. Everyone kept quiet, except the rabble—and Mirabeau. Mirabeau was screaming himself hoarse. It was altogether a baffling, odious situation. If Calonne hadn't squandered the national funds nothing unpleasant would have occurred. . . . Calonne was an infamous rascal.

(A very little while ago Calonne had stood at the summit of his popularity. How shifty is the wind of favor.)

The young girls lunched alone. Just as they were rising from the table in walked M. de Ravoral.

"Am I late?" he said. "What exquisite vision do I see? Madame de Fontenay, more lovely than ever. How is the baby?"

"As well as ever," laughed Térézia.

"And you yourself? One need not ask."

"I have been in Hades for one week."

"*Tant mieux*. To-day you can appreciate heaven the better. Pain and pleasure are built on contrasts."

"Allow me to offer you some breakfast, monsieur," said Claire.

"I have feasted enough," said the gallant Ravoral, bowing his ludicrously bald head to both the ladies.

Térézia knelt on a chair—her elbow on the table.

"You are original, madame," said de Ravoral, apprising her attitude.

Térézia floated to her feet (no other word signifies the grace of her movement).

"No, only uncomfortable. I have had an adventure to-day. The people stopped my carriage. Imagine!"

"You ought not to drive alone. Surely one of your many admirers——"

"Legions, monsieur, and never one to hand when he is wanted. It is a melancholy fact."

"And incredible. What are you ladies doing this afternoon? if I may be so indiscreet as to ask."

Térédia clapped her hands.

"Come with us. I have an appointment at Madame Lebrun's studio at three o'clock. I would value your opinion on my portrait."

Count Ravoral knitted his brows in thought. (He always did that when he had arrived at a definite conclusion.)

"As it happens, I am bound to see my publisher. It seems I write a difficult hand, and invention is ever the easiest course out of a difficulty."

"Yes, monsieur," said Claire, without knowing in the least what Ravoral was talking about, as he absently devoured a crisp roll. She spoke to fill up a pause, and while the wrinkles were clearing on Ravoral's domed forehead.

"I have it. If you will allow me, mademoiselle, I will write a note to Panchouche and ask him to send my proofs to Madame Lebrun's studio. While the lady is immortalizing her just fame, and the most famous face of the century, I can run through my copy. Only flagrant mistakes matter when it comes to print. The public are of all bodies the most long-suffering."

"Maybe," said Térédia. "But at times they are insufferably trying. Can you understand the temper of the people? Are they mad?"

"Sanity and madness are so closely allied, it would tax a stronger brain than mine to define their exact gravity. I would not, madame, swear to anything."

"Yet you look prodigiously grave. Do you think they are likely to chop our heads off?—these barbarous savages!" Térédia laughed at her own wit.

"Who knows? I am, madame, believe me, absolutely in the dark as to the people's intention."

"What does his majesty say about the situation?" asked Claire, lifting her beautiful dark eyes to Ravoral's bald ugliness.

"Nothing, mademoiselle, as might be expected."

"They tell me the queen is looking pale," said Térédia

(she liked airing her intimacy at court, and made much of the confidences of a *ci-devant* lady-in-waiting—now too corpulent to do much else than talk).

“Poor lady; I have it in my heart to pity her majesty,” said de Ravoral, solemnly.

“Oh!” said Térézia, genuinely surprised. “How can you pity a queen! Such a delightful position. I’d love to be a queen.”

“The uncrowned queens are often of greater significance.”

“I thank you, monsieur.” (Térézia tossed her head.)

“I have never envied a Dubarry.”

“True, madame, she lacks intelligence. No, she is not to be envied.”

“A real queen——”

“Is sometimes a real woman——”

Claire sighed. “Her majesty is so beautiful and dignified——”

“And proud. Yes, mademoiselle.”

Ravoral brushed the crumbs from his fancy waistcoat (skin-tight). “I am satisfied that the strongest man will win. Far worse than the queen’s pride is the latest report on Mirabeau’s health.”

“Hateful man,” said Térézia, who remembered a feather-weight slight.

“His health is dangerously impaired and yet he never spares himself. He has the energy of ten men, and the strength of your baby, madame.”

“Really?”

“Mirabeau is an astonishing product of the times. The pity is he over-exerts himself. He is the one man in France who might modify her destiny.”

“I thought you disliked him.”

“Intensely. But I also admire him. I always respect a clever man who takes himself seriously.”

“I don’t see his cleverness.”

“You wouldn’t, madame.”

“You mean my opinion is of no consequence? You

are astonishingly polite, monsieur." Térézia's blue eyes glittered dangerously. She could suffer a million compliments, but the faintest disparagement of her abilities always made her mad.

Ravoral smiled as engagingly as he could with his loose-set lips. "I am afraid Mirabeau would underrate you. But then, of course, he is a monster. Allow me, madame——" He offered Térézia his arm, and conducted her into the salon.

On their way he managed to restore sunshine. How? What he whispered in her ear must remain a secret.

"My friend——" began Térézia, touched to the heart. She paused on the threshold of the Cardilacs' stiff salon and left her sentence unfinished. With a little cry she ran across the room.

"Georges," she said. "Georges, am I dreaming!"

Georges de Boisgaloup was standing in the embrasure of the window. He had no idea he would meet Madame de Fontenay in Paris. He had come to say goodby to Claire, before joining his regiment, at Valence, on his appointment as an officer of artillery.

CHAPTER IX

GEORGES came forward and bowed with ceremonious politeness to the ladies. Térézia, recollecting her manners, swept him a deep curtsy. M. Ravoral rubbed his bald pate. He was trying to remember . . . in two seconds he had remembered—he smiled, and very adroitly he asked Mademoiselle Claire to have the goodness of heart to show him where he could pen his note to Panchouche. Mademoiselle asked monsieur to have the kindness to follow her into the library.

Térézia quite forgot to signal to her friend. When she wanted an audience of a private nature, she had to make it very clear to dear Claire that she needn't hurry back and disturb her. Nor admit anyone else. She remembered nothing but that she hadn't seen Georges for nearly two years . . . an eternity!

Ravoral acted very kindly by Térézia. In M. Cardilac's comfortable library he detained Claire. He begged her to transmit to her father a message of a private character. He had not been looking well, M. de Cardilac. They talked of dear papa's health for quite a reasonable time. And then, adroitly, Ravoral turned the conversation on the amazing merits of that young diplomat—M. le cousin. This occupied quite half an hour. And the winged minutes flew for Claire. . . .

As to the pair in the drawing-room, they were both a prey to emotion. Georges had done his best, by intense application to his studies, to forget Térézia. (A method which on occasions sharpens memory.)

She was more lovely than he had supposed imaginable, more seductive, more humble, more loving, more contrite, more despairing. . . .

What could he do but hold her in his arms, promise eternal devotion, and kiss her passionately?

Térézia's whole demeanor pointed to this natural solution of callous resolves. Georges clean forgot his promise to Napoleon Bonaparte. He clean forgot that he had sworn to forget a woman, worthless enough to throw him over in favor of "a despicable little wretch."

All Georges' sense of chivalry rose at sight of Térézia's distress . . . she did not say very much—she continually broke off her pathetic confidences to ask if Georges still loved her? Georges wrapped his arms around her and kissed her mouth. His arms were as steel—he was tall and manly and altogether improved. She loved Georges with all her broken heart. He loved to hear her soft voice, but above all he loved to feel her beating heart respond to his own, and the warm loveliness of her incomparable self.

"How handsome you are," said Térézia. "Why was I such a weak woman? I had to give in. . . ."

"Are you happy, Térézia? Moderately happy?"

Térézia kissed his sensitive mouth. "You dear, silly boy, who can be moderately happy?" she asked, with wet eyes and trembling lips.

"You have your child, madame. I heard of his birth. May he console you."

"He never will," said Térézia, with honest conviction. She shuddered. "Don't speak of him! He reminds me of all kinds of horrible situations. God! Do you realize what it means to be in the power of a man you detest?"

"My darling!"

"You always were so sympathetic. 'Do you remember . . .'"

(They remembered many things during the next half-hour. They lost count of time. They were intensely miserable, intensely happy.)

"Tell me about your plans," said Térézia presently.

"I am joining my regiment at Valence. It is a troublesome quarter, and we may see fighting."

"Oh!" moaned Térézia, and put her hand over her eyes as if to shut out a painful vision. "I hate the idea of you fighting. Think if you were killed! Do you know what I would do the instant I heard such terrible tidings? I would commit suicide." She nodded her head and disclosed a pair of beautiful and very calm eyes. "Indeed I would."

"Térézia, you must not talk so wickedly."

"I feel wicked. I want you, Georges, and no one else. I will come to Valence—will you have your little Térézia? . . . I will cook for you and work for you and look after our little home. A sub-lieutenant cannot afford a mansion. Am I not wise?"

"You are adorable."

"Do you mean it, Georges?"

"With all my heart and soul."

"How I love you!"

"Darling."

Somewhere about here Térézia heard the approach of M. de Ravoral and dear Claire. M. de Ravoral was talking very loudly.

Térézia put up her hands and adjusted her "adorable hat." (She had got to the stage when she didn't care if it was adorable or not.) She wanted to look tidy and discreet. She moved away from Boisgaloup and seated herself at a table and commenced turning over an album of verses.

"Have you friends in Valence?" she asked in a smooth, "company" voice.

"No, madame."

"That is sad."

"I shall have to depend on the society of my brother officer, Bonaparte—we have joined the same regiment."

"Wasn't he the studious, disagreeable young man?"

"Very studious. I don't find him disagreeable. We have the same interests."

"Par exemple?"

"We talk over the future and pore over maps. Bonaparte is never tired of studying the map of Europe. He

is a queer fellow, but interesting. When he talks no dream seems too ambitious."

"Quite a superior young man. . . . There you are, dear Claire. I and M. de Boisgaloup have just been wondering where you were."

M. de Ravoral expressed great remorse at his selfishness in detaining mademoiselle.

Térédia generously forgave him.

CHAPTER X

IT is nearly three o'clock," said Claire. "And you know, Térézia, how cross Madame Lebrun gets if you keep her waiting."

"True, very true. Is the carriage there? Monsieur Boisgaloup, have the kindness to look out on the courtyard—the window is just outside, in the passage."

"Certainly, madame."

"It seems rude to leave him behind," said Claire, as soon as the young man had left the room.

"Darling, we'll take him with us," cried Térézia triumphantly. "Madame Lebrun never minds company; the more the better, she says. Artists are so generous."

"Sensible creatures," chimed Ravoral.

Georges returned and announced that M. de Cardillac's carriage was waiting the convenience of the ladies.

Claire explained—with some trepidation—that circumstances prevented her staying at home and entertaining her guest. She expressed her regret very prettily.

Georges bowed and said that he was also very sorry, and hoped that the next time he called on Mlle. de Cardillac he would be more fortunate.

Térézia buttoned her glove and, without glancing up, suggested to Claire that monsieur—if he had nothing better to do—would be welcome in Madame Lebrun's studio. "She is such an interesting woman," said the marchioness.

Georges had heard of the lady's reputation. He regretted extremely that he couldn't avail himself of the pleasure of accompanying the ladies.

"Why not?" asked Térézia, raising her heavenly eyes to the ceiling with an expression to match her gentle query.

"My mother expects me," said Georges.

"Ah!" said Térézia. She quickly looked down again

at her immaculate gloves. ("The old vixen!" she thought.)

"Monsieur," said Ravoral, twirling his cane, "filial affection is beautiful to behold."

"Monsieur Boisgaloup has always been a pattern son," explained Térézia, coldly.

"You flatter me," said Georges. "I leave Paris tomorrow."

Térézia looked up hurriedly and met Ravoral's keen glance. She did not care a sou what he thought of her! Georges must not leave Paris without seeing her again. He mustn't!

"We cannot spare you," she said lightly. "Why, I have a thousand things to tell you." She turned to Ravoral. "Monsieur Boisgaloup and I are old friends. When we first came to Paris—four years ago—my mother and I stayed with Madame Boisgaloup. She was so kind."

"Indeed?" said Ravoral. "Now you mention it I remember the fact quite well. I have the honor of Madame Boisgaloup's acquaintance; a charming lady of unimpeachable virtue. Maybe a trifle too strict——"

He left his sentence unfinished as Claire entered the room with her hat on and her little reticule over her bare arm. Claire never went anywhere without her bag. She was the soul of neatness.

Térézia held out a refractory glove to Georges. "But-ton it," she commanded. "Go on, dear Claire. It'll save time. I'll follow in half a second. Don't wait for me, M. de Ravoral."

With a sardonic smile Ravoral followed his hostess. "What a woman," he said emphatically.

"Who?"

"Pardon, mademoiselle; you."

"I?"

"Mademoiselle, you are altogether too much of a saint."

Claire smiled. "Indeed, sir, I am not very strict."

At the bend of the staircase old Ravoral looked up. "A quick settlement is often an advantage," he said. He had

caught sight of Térézia's fluttering draperies, and the arched beauty of her foot. Behind her came Georges, carrying her fan, and looking wonderfully solemn.

Térézia, during the short drive to the studio (which passed without any untoward incident), was decidedly sulky.

The old gentleman, on the little seat opposite the ladies, respected their silence. Only once did he speak. "A deuced clever woman," he murmured aloud.

"Who?" laughed Claire. "Ah, monsieur, restrain your language."

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle. I was alluding to our mutual friend, the widow Boissaloup."

Térézia tossed her head. "She is as cunning as a fox," she said. "And though she is only about the size of a doll, she rules her tall son completely."

"Madame," said Ravoral, "let us hope your son will be brought up on the same excellent principles."

"I wouldn't hamper my child with a code of morals utterly out of date. To tell you the truth, Claire, I despise a henpecked man."

"Georges is so splendid," said Claire enthusiastically.

Térézia didn't answer.

Ravoral sucked the head of his cane (a distressful habit of his) and chuckled.

Térézia, seated on the dais in a charming attitude, was the cynosure of all eyes. M. Ravoral was scanning his proofs, but they only had half his attention. He liked to watch Madame Vigée Lebrun at work—with what lightning rapidity she wielded her brush—how she laughed and chatted and smiled and frowned and disagreed in a wholly agreeable fashion.

She was a woman of fashion and an artist of high repute. She could command her own price and choose her own patrons. No wonder she found life charming.

Her mouth was soft and humorous, the lips red enough. Her brown eyes were full of vivacity. She was below

medium height, rather inclined to plumpness. She generally wore a turban on her little head, a gay-colored handkerchief which half concealed her russet-tinted hair. Madame Lebrun was rather proud of her curly locks, but she was by no means a vain creature.

For an hour Térézia had kept her position, and now, as the soft-toned grandfather clock chimed a quarter past four, the artist laid down her brushes and stepped back to scan her canvas.

"Don't move, madame," she called to her model. "I want an unbiased opinion on my work. Come here, young man, and tell me frankly if you consider it successful."

Térézia smiled, and looked kindly at Panchouche's messenger. He hadn't been five minutes in the studio, but, if she'd known him a lifetime, she couldn't have been more sure of his feelings. She didn't like men who considered it necessary to hide their admiration under a respectful glance. She appreciated the youth's bold-eyed approval of her charms. Never since he had entered the room had he taken his eyes off her face for a moment. Now he actually started, as if struck, at Madame Lebrun's sharp command. He sauntered over to the easel, with his hands in his pockets. Térézia liked his audacity. This man of the people looked as if the whole world belonged to him.

He was a tall, dark young man, loosely strung together, poorly dressed (poor fellow!), with a flashy necktie, and well oiled black hair. His nose was ludicrously long (no, he wasn't handsome), his red lips were thick and smooth, while his teeth were surprisingly even. In the presence of his betters he smiled, perfectly at his ease, in spite of Ravoral's angry frown—evidently he looked down upon his "superiors." Here was a type essentially modern, a type unknown to her, full of mystery and charm. . . . His eyes? No, she couldn't describe his eyes—were they black, blue, gray? His glance—as he looked up from scrutinizing the picture on the easel—was thrilling. Involuntarily she shivered, and lowered her eyes before his immense stare . . . Ah, she thought, he wouldn't be afraid to meet

man or devil, and in love he'd scale superhuman heights. The men of her class lacked primitive strength—weaklings all. She paid a passing thought to Devin, a contemptuous, withering thought, quite forgetting that he'd sprung from the same stock as "Tallien." She'd caught his name all right. Ravoral had condescendingly addressed the young man by name, when he had handed him his proofs. "Thank you, Tallien," he'd said. His tone had sent the blood surging into Tallien's rather pale cheeks . . . one day he'd retaliate. She dimly sensed his hatred and his power. Térézia felt convinced that she had before her—in spite of his deplorable clothes and no less deplorable taste in neckties—a coming man . . . he would be great one day; he would command; he would make other men cringe in front of him as frightened dogs. She closed her eyes in ecstasy, seeing Tallien with the whip hand raised in action . . . he'd never hit her—he'd defend her with his own blood, if necessary. She took a deep breath and shut her eyes and leaned back in her chair, exhausted.

"You are tired," said Madame Lebrun. "I've almost finished for to-day."

"Give me five minutes," murmured Térézia, "and I will be at your disposal, madame."

Tallien had forgotten the portrait. His bold eyes remained fixed on Madame de Fontenay.

Old Ravoral, highly amused, nodded his bald head. What a providential bolt from the blue, sent to stanch her wounded vanity! That astute gentleman never found any trouble in piecing two and two together. If the lovely Térézia held young Georges' heart, the widow, his mother, retained his filial obedience; as a lover he was "impossible." The lady's palpable annoyance in the carriage had made this very clear. A boy with a fierce sense of honor wouldn't suit her humor—as if all the promises in the world didn't fade before the sublime law of love! . . . He saw her point of view. In his youth he'd always taken it.

Truth to tell, the bald-headed gentleman had estimated the situation to a nicety. Never in all her life had Térézia

felt so insulted. Never had Georges felt so miserable. Wrath had sat on her brow and imperiled virtue. Georges, at the poignant moment of separation—which he could have put off, if he'd wanted to—had never found her so lovely, so desirable. "Listen, darling," he'd said—"when I come back——" "No, thank you—she'd no use for a devout lover who was also a devoted son." On the full tide of her wounded dignity she'd sailed out of his life—in the wake of old Ravoral (full of curiosity) and that guileless Claire—who never saw anything. She'd walked down the stairs, not vouchsafing the miserable Georges another glance or word. . . . No wonder the darling was glad of a new distraction to modify her "cruel disappointment."

"I am impatient, sir, to hear your approval or your condemnation," called the goddess from the throne, clasping her beautiful arms round her knees, and opening her shining eyes upon Tallien, full of astonishing vitality and condescension.

Old Ravoral with one bleared eye enjoyed the comedy highly. *Sotto voce* he repeated his comment—"what a woman!"

Little Claire did not understand anything at all. Madame Lebrun considered that Madame Fontenay showered distinguished consideration on an unknown, frankly plebeian young man, who conducted himself with amusing ostentation. If she knew anything of human nature, young Tallien would not long remain an obscure printer's devil. He said as much himself. On the slightest encouragement this youth of twenty-four would willingly have detailed to the company his life's history . . . it was a comical situation.

Ravoral encouraged the audacity of Panchouche's messenger. At every pause he slipped in a suggestion—he righted as it were the little boat and sent it down the stream again—the stream of blatant self-satisfaction. Any other "lackey" in his position would have trembled, blushed, and answered the ladies' condescending questions in monosyllables. Tallien talked like a book, he aired

his knowledge, he gave his advise (unasked), he had the superb effrontery to criticize M. de Ravoral's spelling and punctuation—he even suggested an amendment in the text. Térézia laughed. Madame Lebrun laughed. Claire smiled. Ravoral, repeatedly nodded his billiard-ball head. Tallien, lounging against the wall, did not realize the nature of the sensation he was creating.

Térézia gazed delightedly as this young giant in trade, with a very serious air, leaned over the easel holding her unfinished portrait. He looked from the picture to the lady.

"The mouth is too small," he said. "Why diminish those lips? They are perfect of their kind. You have got the expression of her eyes to a nicety, madame. I like the pose of the head, and the way the shoulders set. Here, with advantage, a softening touch of lace would break the line in the background. On the whole the portrait is a work of art."

Madame Lebrun, suffocating with ill-suppressed laughter, nodded her head. "Thank you, good sir. I am much obliged. You have given me some invaluable hints. Where, if I may ask, have you studied art?"

"In Paris and abroad." He looked at Térézia, who was still watching him with flattering interest. "I have always been an ardent admirer of Spain and Spanish artists. In my opinion, Velasquez stands alone."

"Perhaps," said Madame Lebrun, sarcastically, "you have studied under him? If so, you have been fortunate in your master."

Old Ravoral chuckled. (She'd caught him nicely.)

Tallien with complete unconsciousness informed Madame Lebrun that he had not had that privilege. He was only an amateur. He regretted that his parents had chosen for him an uncongenial career. "It is no pleasure to get scolded for another man's carelessness," said he, staring in a pointed manner at our author's proofs.

Ravoral almost collapsed at this sally.

"You will get on, young man, like a house on fire," he said.

"When the fire starts."

"Eh!" The old man looked up. "You have talents behind your folly. Don't waste them."

"On the contrary, I am storing up every ounce against an emergency."

"How do you intend to win your fortune?" asked Térézia, very slowly.

He looked at her with overpowering admiration. "Ah, madame, if I knew I would not be here. We are all play-things of chance. I can bear my present obscurity by just being able to glimpse my future greatness."

Térézia gave the young man a ravishing smile.

"Do enlighten us," she said. "It is always so thrilling to hear a declaration of faith."

"There is gold and honor and fame and love in store for me, and vengeance on those who have hitherto hindered my ambition. It is written."

"How very interesting," drawled Ravoral. "Here, my lucky young friend, take this back to your master with my compliments" (he handed Tallien his proofs), "and tell him he has the very devil in his apprentice. He ought to clap such a dangerous seer into prison, or marry him to his daughter."

"She does not interest me," said Tallien coldly, dropping Ravoral's proofs on the floor.

Madame Lebrun laughed aloud. "Don't go! Ask him to stay, monsieur. He is as good as a play. I have been dying of *ennui* all the morning."

"Continue," said Ravoral, turning his back on Tallien's tall figure.

"If monsieur would indicate the direction?"

"Wherever your invention pleases," answered Ravoral, without looking round.

"I have never invented a situation, though I've told many a lie."

"Here is a promising subject for the charitable," said

Térédia gaily. "Monsieur de Ravoral, don't be so rude! Offer this prodigy a post more worthy of his talents. Would a secretaryship suit you, sir?"

Tallien met her glance with a bold stare.

"That depends on my employer."

"If he is the most charming man in Paris?"

"I would be jealous of him, madame."

"How so?"

"In that case he would be your lover."

"Oh!" Térédia gasped. Tallien, for all his ugliness, pleased her enormously.

He took a step forward, trod on M. de Ravoral's manuscript, and, with a disdainful gesture, took it up and dropped it into his pocket.

And he kissed the goddess's outstretched hand.

He bowed to the company in general. "We will meet again," he said, in the tone of a man conferring a favor. In another minute he had gone, before Ravoral had had time to realize his abominable insolence, banging the door after him. They could hear him whistling down the stairs—one of the anti-royalist songs of the day.

"A firebrand," murmured Madame Lebrun, looking thoughtful. "I wouldn't wonder if we did hear of him again. What do you say, M. de Ravoral?"

"Nothing."

"Times are changing."

Claire sighed and looked up, sweetly. "There were riots last night," she said.

Old Ravoral got up and bowed before the young girl. "Take my advice, mademoiselle," he said, "and follow M. le cousin abroad. He'll understand and forgive your indiscretion."

"I swear you are right, sir," said Madame Lebrun. "Thank God I've got my passports in order."

"You stand apart, madame. How seldom do we find beauty and genius combined. Go, go, go, all who can."

"How foolish," said Térédia. She rose, and came down from the dais, looking a trifle giddy. "I intend to stay.

There's poor, darling Claire blushing. Fie, sir, to wound her tender modesty."

"It's not a question of modesty, it's a question of life, mesdames," said the artist. "I adore life."

"So do I," said Térézia, slowly.

"Térézia!"

"Yes, dear?"

"What are you thinking of? I have spoken to you twice," said Claire, affectionately slipping her hand through her friend's arm.

"Of love," said Térézia. She drew herself up to her full height.

"Mes compliments, madame," said Ravoral.

Claire looked from one to the other, as she tied her bonnet-strings. "Why, what has happened?" she said.

"It isn't a laughing matter, sir. And love is out of the question," said Lebrun. "Kick 'em, I say! We are too lenient."

"Or too indolent——"

"The king——"

Ravoral bowed. "As a figure-head he's played out—as a personality he never existed."

"I have always been loyal, sir."

"Madame, for centuries my family have tied the royal night-cap."

"We all know your traditions, sir—and your pride. Talk to the queen. Something ought to be done."

"So we've said for—centuries."

"In the meanwhile——"

"The queen makes butter, and the king turns out a very pretty key, only it'll never unlock a door. We're up against fate, madame, and several generations of injustice. I see it, if not as clearly as our friend Mirabeau, at least sufficiently plainly to advise the rich to leave the country to the poor. They'll play ducks and drakes with it for a time" (he took a pinch of snuff)—"excuse me, madame—and then they'll be very happy to be—beaten. We

have the traditions, madame. I look upon blood as invincible."

Térédia yawned. "What are you talking about?" she said. "Monsieur, I never take any interest in politics. It must have been a game invented by a stupid man."

"It seems dreadful—if it is true—that the people haven't enough to eat," said Claire. "One hears the most terrible stories."

"Mademoiselle, I've heard worse facts."

"It is true, then?" said Lebrun.

"Only too true, madame, and a great deal besides."

"You believe——"

"Nothing of what I hear, and only a certain part of what I see. Enough to make my hair, if I had any, stand on end."

"As I said before, sir, it is not a situation to be glossed over with witticism. I hate wits! I've had to do with them all my life. And I tell you frankly, sir, their folly is astounding."

"When I gravely counsel mademoiselle, *notre toute belle*" (he bowed to Térédia—who was looking at her portrait), "and you, madame, to flee this distracted, hell-ridden France, you merely laugh. By laughing myself I hope to encourage your gravity."

"What can they do, after all?" said Madame Lebrun, looking out of the window. "Look, *chérie*," she put her arm round Claire's supple waist, "there's a representative body of our—masters, marching across the square. Have you ever seen such horrors? There are women, too—tattered, blackened, disheveled women . . . and little children. God pity them."

She closed the window. "Don't let's look at them. Don't let's think of them." She curtsied to Térédia. "We meet to-night at the opera," she said.

"It's as good as a play," said Ravoral.

CHAPTER XI

THE fall of the Bastille woke the queen to feverish activity. She had been dawdling on the brink of a volcano. Obviously she must remove herself and her family (including the king) to a position of safety.

During the hot nights of September, 1798, she felt as if air was denied her. She awoke choking. She would throw out her arms as if searching for support—hardly knowing what she did—poor, distraught lady. The one thing certain was that she'd keep her fears to herself. She would rather die than flicker an eyelid or yield an inch in face of the infuriated populace. Was *she* the cause of their suffering, their hatred, their crimes? She mocked the futility of so paltry a lie. She had had nothing to do with the government. She could not stem the tide of just complaints. Good God, if the people couldn't get bread, why didn't they eat cake?

Maybe, in a spirit of misplaced levity, she had used some such term, when the dismal situation was explained to her with suave loyalty. . . . She might have done so. How her words were brought up against her! She had to face a blank wall of callous indifference. The Royal house of France no longer mattered to the people of France.

In secret her majesty collected her jewels, and trifles of sentimental value. She was for ever selecting, discarding, and reinstating a bauble. There was much talk in the immediate royal entourage. A noble gentleman of foreign lineage, to wit Count Fersen, was seen frequently in the queen's society. He seemed to exercise a soothing influence on the royal lady. In all that hubbub of inaccuracy he alone exerted a sensible authority. He was a

born courtier and an accredited diplomat. He also loved the queen with devout homage.

She listened to him—she wavered—she promised “to look into matters.” If necessity called for action the king would act, she said.

Frail promise! And yet his majesty had the “best intentions.” His rather passive heart was set beating at the rapid turn of affairs.

He would seriously consult some capable man—say M. de Mirabeau. M. de Mirabeau was far too much taken up with the vital business of life and death to find time to listen to his majesty’s eternal platitudes. Louis favored the idea of throwing as many buns as possible to the irate bear. If it came to the worst, in his own royal person, with all the paraphernalia of state and trappings of royalty, he’d face the angry populace and speak to his people, as man to man. Surely, in face of such unprecedented condescension the people would submit to necessity and go quietly home? He did not ask for more. All he wanted was peace.

Count Fersen listened attentively to his majesty’s suggestions, bowed profoundly, and by his humble silence gave the troubled king to understand that he understood his fatherly goodwill towards his stiff-necked subjects.

The queen continued in feverish haste arranging her wardrobe, packing her jewels and restricting, to straining-point, her court. All who wished, among the aristocracy of France, were at liberty to travel abroad, pending a satisfactory settlement of the internal troubles at home.

Only a few availed themselves of their opportunity.

Down in hot Paris the ferment remained unabated, and day by day, night by night, it gained in vigor. As in a foul disease, infection spread to all classes. No longer did the hooligan, the ragged vendor of matches and boot-laces, stand alone; he was surrounded by “respectable” people, deputies, waremongers, newsvendors, little clerks and pretty seamstresses. Like a monster snowball the

crowd grew. Yelling fishwives elbowed no less yelling laundresses. Fat old men, in tawdry nightcaps, hugged the arms of spruce young dandies—all alike imbued with the spirit of fraternity and liberty.

No one exactly knew what all the hue and cry was about. Some wanted bread—honest bread; others hungered for indigestible fame—and all suspected each other; these strenuous young men marching under no flag, preaching dissension, socialism, revolution. . . . Suspicion hung ripe in the heated air. At any moment the storm might burst. What were the people waiting for? Shouting wasn't good enough. Howling wasn't good enough. Mirabeau, dying by inches, held them in check. It was a fine time for the advent of a great man. France held but one and he was dying. She also held sedition and murder, and ungovernable hate.

The queen wrote again to her father. His majesty took his time in answering her letters, and when he did so, used very guarded language. It was all rather in the nature of a nightmare, preposterously improbable. At times the queen danced gaily with her little children in the pretty gardens of the Trianon, and refused to believe her own ears. All was false—false—false! False as ugly, wicked rumor! There wasn't a spice of danger in the air. Listen—the bees were murmuring;—see—the butterflies were reveling in the golden autumn air. . . . The next year would come, a splendid year. There'd be a rich harvest and bread enough for everybody. Why should people starve? It was entirely against the king's wish. The king loved his people. She'd show herself in Paris. She'd drive about the streets and let the people look at her. Surely that would calm them?—the beasts!

She'd caught sight—through the heavy spiked railings of her pretty rose-garden—her private garden—of some dreadful faces, inhuman faces, watching the little dauphin and Princess Elizabeth playing by the fish-pond. The little boy was fishing with a little gilt rod, and his sister was sailing a little green boat with white silk sails.

The queen rose from her garden seat, and called the children indoors. Safe in their nurseries, she locked the door and sat down by the window and wept.

"Why are you crying, madame?" asked the dauphin.

"I'm not crying," she said. And she raised her head and laughed. "Come away," she said. "We'll all go away together."

"Where?"

"Anywhere," she said wildly.

"And papa?"

"He'll come with us. And Madame Elizabeth and kind M. de Fersen. Children, we'll travel north and live in a big, big forest. I'll cook the food——"

"I'll make the beds."

"Yes, darling."

"I'll fish the fish."

"Yes, darling."

"Let's start at once."

The queen put her hand to her forehead. "I've forgotten," she said. "I've something to do."

She kissed her children, went into her own rooms, and began feverishly unpacking a box she'd packed that morning.

A tragedy is never so acute as when it is simple. Poor, distraught lady—your worst nightmare was not one-half as terrible as the reality. Remember, she left her children alive. She followed in the murdered king's footsteps, and she left her children to the living world. A racked, mad world—with a little home-made god, in sky-blue clothes, at the head of affairs. She knew the future god by sight—Deputy Robespierre had long had his eye on her. He was antagonistic to Mirabeau. He had his own adherents and large words, terrible words. Even as a little deputy in the representative chamber—called together by the king's clemency (or folly, rather)—he had made himself heard. He spoke as a man, they said—as a devil, we say, with an apology to Satan. At his very first sight of the queen he'd noticed her head. He'd looked up at her

—and smiled. “She’ll be pretty, by and by,” he murmured sentimentally. Young Tallien—who’d stepped up—the lower these hell-spawn plunged the higher they stepped—applauded him. “Capital,” he agreed—as it were reading Deputy Robespierre’s hidden meaning. His glance wasn’t in the least veiled. The queen took it grandly. How she despised these fellows! How she despised them! She never feared them, never once. It was Fate she warded off—an implacable, cruel fate, which had designated her (and hers) to pay off in person a very ancient score . . . it had to be . . . there is never an end to evil, or evil blood. Civilization, education, tradition—call it what you will—is the flimsiest excuse in existence—for excesses. Fraternity, equality, liberty likewise. When order runs riot, heaven recedes. Mirabeau tried to weather the storm. He was caught in a whirlwind and died. You remember his state interment and all the fine things said about him? A kind of ghastly humor over the affair. Never had Robespierre attended a funeral in higher spirits. We can see him, fanning his face with his black-edged pocket handkerchief, weeping into it crocodile tears. “Glory, glory, glory . . .” The guns saluted the passing of a hero (and a man). The people cheered not the dead but the living.

Away in Versailles, the queen sat in her garden; M. de Fersen at her feet, reading poetry. Her ladies in a pretty group in the background. Her children on two little stools—one nursing a doll and the other mending a kite. Down the long avenue walked his majesty, with his head held high. His majesty had no time for poetry. He had just saluted the queen’s hand—a very white hand against her ample robe of blue brocade—and walked off, engaged upon the ponderous consideration of national affairs . . . his majesty was perfectly assured of its just issue. He never—like the queen—dreaded his fate . . . an anointed king has a very solid position in life. . . .

CHAPTER XII

TÉRÉZIA yawned.

"You can speak until to-morrow evening," she said, crossly, "but you'll never convince me that you are right. Why should the time be ominous? People have quarreled before and got over it. I am very well read in history. My poor father gave me an excellent education."

"Did he?" said Madame de Lameth, quietly.

Térédia didn't observe the skeptical tone of her voice, nor the slightly incredulous lifting of madame's pretty eyebrows. In her heart of hearts Madame de Lameth despised her dear friend Madame de Fontenay, not on account of her husband's partiality in that quarter, but because she knew that she was a vain and insincere woman. She was far too bright herself to be jealous of a vulgar flirt, who adored kissing, and who loved no one (the little brunette had summed up the character of the beauty to a nicety) but herself. She couldn't (and she didn't try to) convince poor deluded Alexandre that she was right. Térédia's loveliness, in her later teens, was too intoxicating to leave any room for doubt in a male mind as to her perfection; she was, according to her many admirers, "altogether beautiful." The Madame de Lameths could only wring their hands at such folly and keep silence—if they were wise. "Give a woman a long enough rope and she'll end by hanging herself," is a valuable maxim. The idea that Térédia was bound to fall—sooner or later—into a pit of her own digging, consoled the ladies who possessed indifferent features and volatile husbands. "A face—a face, what is in a face?" they asked.

Térédia, who laughed behind their backs—jealousy is such an amusing quality in your friends—to their faces

was fond of airing her little stock of brains, which she exaggerated quite fabulously. Would you believe it? she considered herself quite as clever as she was beautiful. And, as a set-off to her natural talents, she had her "splendid education." At times she'd quite impress strangers by the magnitude of her learning. They'd had no idea that Spanish young ladies were so strictly brought up. They'd always imagined they were allowed a certain indolent freedom, more attention being paid to their deportment and dancing than to their spelling and grammar. "Oh, no," said the marchioness, aghast at such ignorance. "I had six tutors and six governesses, all instructing me at the same time—different subjects, of course." Then she'd smile—her bewildering, lovely smile. And all the men believed in her, on their oath. In her soft warm hand she held the sceptre of triumphant womanhood.

Alexandre had unexpectedly—after luncheon—Térédia had driven over to spend the day with her friends—been obliged to leave for town. Madame de Lameth had been quite distressed. Térédia had taken it calmly.

The ladies were seated on the west terrace—so sunny and cheerful. Térédia was playing with a white rose—she was all in white herself—her beautiful eyes kept roving round the well-kept gardens, admiring their brilliant autumn coloring.

"How peaceful it is," she said.

"Yes."

"Yet, what would life be without excitement—and love?"

"Love affairs bore me."

Térédia gave Madame de Lameth a wondering glance. "Why? You are quite pretty," she said.

"I'll tell you a secret. I'm a happy woman. A happy woman has no need for love affairs."

"I can never have sufficient."

"I'm satisfied with Alexandre."

"Are you so sure of him?"

"Entirely. He flirts with every woman in Paris—including yourself, darling."

Térézia wasn't going to be browbeaten—by a little woman with a sallow skin, too. "I love your husband," she said lazily. "One day, when you're horrid, we intend to run away together."

"Well, my dear, I can't do more than encourage him. Didn't you hear me implore Alexandre, not an hour ago, to let me go to Paris while he stayed and entertained you?"

"I heard you."

"Wasn't it unselfish?"

"No. You didn't mean it. Madame, have you heard the news from Versailles?"

"Too terrible for words. The rabble actually forced their way into the queen's private apartments. They menaced her—and the royal children."

"The king behaved nobly."

"Weakly."

"He promised——"

"A king acts—he doesn't promise! Once again he has let an opportunity slip."

"What could he do?"

"Assert his authority."

"M. de Ravoral says he hasn't any."

"M. de Ravoral—for all his nightcap traditions—is the greatest socialist I know. He also stands aside—to be trampled on. It's maddening. We'll lose our heads by it, see if we don't. What a thousand calamities that Mirabeau is dying, before he has finished his work. It isn't kind of God to make unnecessary trouble in this world."

"Who cares about him! He deserves his fate. I'm a fatalist, darling." Térézia rose, and walked up and down the terrace, looking very superlative indeed, in her white silk frock, her white silk sash, her white transparent silk stockings and her white satin high-heeled shoes. Over her arm she trailed a long scarf of Brussels lace.

"And you're a dear," she said, kissing the little lady.

"I promise you I'll never run away with Alexandre, at least not with your Alexandre. Swear you won't tell him? I hate hurting people's feelings—but I've ceased to love him—entirely and for ever; I never said a truer word. *Chérie*." She clutched her friend's shoulder. "Look at me. Trust me. You do believe me?"

"Who is he?"

"The other man?"

"Yes."

"How did you guess?"

"I'm a witch—or a sensible woman."

"You are more than sensible, you are wonderful. Guess again."

"He's in the house."

"You're a miracle! He doesn't know it himself."

"I wonder."

"Don't. It is a fact. I adore him and he is ignorant of my feelings. Isn't it a tragedy?"

"Knowing my husband's secretary, I'd say yes. He's an abominable man."

Térézia nodded. "Don't you see? That is just what makes him so attractive. There are *heaps* of nice men, just like your sweet Alexandre, all eyes, poetry, sighs—and not an atom of feeling. This Tallien is a furnace. If he touches my hand it'll burn like fire. If he looks at me I'll flame from head to foot. I've lain awake in my big, lonely room sobbing for him. That's love!"

"He's an impostor."

"No matter!"

"He's lazy and impudent."

"No matter! How long has he had his present post?"

"Some three or four months. A recommendation from M. Barras. My cousin Paul is an authority whom we can't afford to neglect."

"I've never met him."

"Just as well."

"I'm not so greedy as you think. Honestly, Tallien, *c'est suffisant*. Has he made love to you?"

"Pouff! The idea! For the matter of that, his reputation is scandalous."

"It would be," she said softly. "I tell you he's a man of fire."

"I find him detestable."

"Are his parents living?"

"I've never inquired. I presume his birth isn't his chief attraction."

"In a way, yes. Imagine the man's audacity! By birth he ought to pull down our carriage steps—dirt beneath our feet, my dear. Through his own merits he has raised himself——"

"In these topsy-turvy times that's no merit."

"Naturally he's been lucky."

"Oh, very."

"Madame, where are you hiding him?"

"He seldom lunches with us."

"I intend to see him."

"Don't be a fool, Térézia. I've always declared that you are not a bad woman, only a silly child. How old are you?"

"Nearly seventeen."

"How's the baby?"

"Quite well—ask Christina. Hush! I hear steps. Darling, I'm going to ask him to my party."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. He's not of our world."

"A new element."

"A dangerous one."

"Just look how he has got on. A year ago he was at Pantouche, a needy printer's devil, earning kicks and pence. Now he is at a gentleman's house, at a gentleman's occupation. Next year M. Tallien will employ his own secretary."

"Et puis?"

Térézia looked dreamily in front of her. "After that he'll earn fame and love and wealth."

"Splendid. Who's told you?"

"He—himself."

"So you've met before?"

"Once."

"T'ja!"

"It's quite true. It was a year ago at Lebrun's studio. I remember everything, as if it were yesterday . . . love is faithful."

Madame de Lameth got up. "I've no patience with you," she said. "I'll tell Christina to whip you soundly."

"I'm in earnest."

"So am I. In my heart of hearts I've always liked you. You are more sinned against than sinning. Such a husband! Poor dear! Come in, and you shall have a big pear and look at little Alexandre in his bath. How time flies! It is four o'clock."

"Look," said Térézia; "there he is!"

M. Tallien—in quite a creditable coat and almost an elegant necktie—he had improved—came towards them, with his hat in his hand, bowing deferentially.

"Excuse me, mesdames," he said in his deep voice, looking at Térézia. "I am searching for M. de Lameth."

"He left for Paris after lunch."

"A thousand pardons."

Madame de Lameth walked on. He stepped up to Madame de Fontenay. "Am I forgotten?" he whispered.

"No," she murmured.

"I am amply rewarded——"

"For what?"

"A lost year, madame."

"I congratulate you on your present position, monsieur."

"I do not intend to retain it for long."

"And your next move?"

"A leap into the light, madame."

She nodded and ran after Madame de Lameth, smiling as much as to say—Is not this a wonderful creature? She met coldly unresponsive eyes.

"We will not detain you, monsieur," said Madame de Lameth to the secretary.

"I am entirely at your service." His eyes met hers with a challenging glance, a contemptuous, half-pitying glance.

"Have the goodness to gather Madame de Fontenay a bunch of roses," returned the lady, icily, ignoring his insolence.

"Please do," said Térézia. "I will carry them home with much pleasure."

"I love white roses and all they represent," he declared, entirely mollified. "The roses of Bois-le-Vert are famous."

"Yes," said Térézia.

His eyes swept her from her feet to the crown of her uncovered head. She drank in his admiration. She moved into the sunlight. "Follow me," she said, "I will show you my favorite tree, with madame's kind permission." She gave her friend a swift triumphant glance. Didn't she, Térézia, invariably get her own way? The gods fight for those they love. The gods would surely fight for Tallien—this tall young man, whose taste in neckties had considerably improved.

She remembered their first meeting and every word he had spoken to her. She walked very upright, with slow, sensuous grace. In her hand she trailed her Brussels scarf, and on the little finger of her left hand gleamed a huge diamond. The sun burnished her wonderful hair.

Madame de Lameth picked up Térézia's hat, which she had carelessly dropped on the path, and resigned herself to the inevitable. She deplored dear Térézia's questionable taste. Tallien was a cad. She went indoors to fetch a pair of scissors and a length of ribbon. She wasn't going to have her roses spoiled to please anyone in the world.

She found them standing together under a great rose-tree. They weren't speaking. Térézia's breath came sharp and quick and the flush had deepened on her soft round cheeks. Tallien was looking excessively calm. His long, square-tipped fingers were trying to grasp a branch just beyond his reach. He bounded in the air, caught a splendid rose, and brushed it across Térézia's mouth.

"My first kiss," he whispered so low that she scarcely heard him. Every nerve was tingling in her body.

She drew a deep breath.

"Make haste," she said, as if waking from a trance. "We must not keep Madame de Lameth waiting. The scissors, the scissors!" she cried gaily. "Now, monsieur, do your best to please us both."

Tallien broke off the rose which had touched Térézia's mouth. "I thank you, madame," he said. He placed the rose in his buttonhole. "I will not detain you many minutes," he said, as he deftly cut Térézia a few choice blooms.

He handed the bunch to her with a bow. "Allow me, madame," said he.

She thanked him with her eyes.

Half-way home she remembered she had quite forgotten to ask Tallien to her party. Should she send him a card? She decided against this. The gods would act for him. She buried her face in his roses.

CHAPTER XIII

TÉRÉZIA stood frowning in front of her dressing-table mirror. She was fingering a tricolor cockade, undecided where to place it. It spoiled her toilette, it was flashy and gaudy and inartistic, just the kind of favor men would invent to try the patience of artistic women-kind.

"You see yourself, Christina," said Térézia, holding out the despised ribbon, "in my hair it is obviously wrong, on my bodice it clashes with my sash——"

"With a white dress any sash will do. There is a nice red ribbon in your drawer——"

"It'll stay there. I am wearing pale-blue to-day and no other color. For what purpose did I get my turquoises out of the safe in the teeth of monsieur's opposition?" Térézia patted a charming necklace which showed up her white neck to perfection. "Blue is the Virgin's color. I am going to be saintly to-day. Whatever provocations are in store for me I am going to face them with angelic fortitude." With a quick movement she pinned the despised cockade (a fairly large one) as an order below her left breast. "Well, anyhow, it draws attention to my figure. Don't you hate prejudice? All the new people revel in these badges. They say the king, to placate his enemies, wears one himself in his hat, and that the queen carries hers, *en cachet*, in the hollow of her shoe. She has always trampled on popular opinion. Now she is the most disliked woman in France. I have heard such *dreadful* things about her—I wonder if they are true. . . ."

Térézia had, as usual, talked herself into a good temper. With lavish generosity she scented her fine lace handkerchief.

Christina remonstrated.

"I am doing it on purpose," she said. "One never knows nowadays whom one may meet or where they have come from. I wish the honorable deputies talked less and washed more. I believe they really keep themselves dirty to please the people. The people!" Térézia whirled towards the door in indignant haste. "I tell you, Christina, we are too kind to the people—after all they are terribly uninteresting, and we have all got to weep over their troubles and pretend to make a frightful fuss of them—dirty gutter-snipes! I am like a fine-bred dog who barks at rags—indeed I am. But of course when M. Robespierre airs their grievances I am the first to sob. I am sure this Robespierre is deceitful. I generally get on well with men, but I dislike his sickliness and his smiles. Come out, Christina, and watch him to-day. You never enjoy my parties. Everyone says they are brilliant. . . . Christina, I have forgotten my watch. . . . Six o'clock! Oh, I must fly."

The Marquis and the Marquise de Fontenay stood on the upper terrace to welcome their friends. The marquis had got himself up in blue and yellow—he looked like an ungainly butterfly; he never remained still for one minute; he ran forward, he ran backwards, he bowed, he kissed hands, he pirouetted—all within a prescribed space.

His tall wife did the honors after the manner of Versailles (all women are more or less adaptive); except for the prescribed dignified curtsy she stood immovable, extending a gracious hand to the men, poising it at the exact level to receive the customary salute. She might all her life have done nothing but "receive." How did this child—barely seventeen—arrive at such distinction?

"Allow me to present to you, madame, Deputy Viscount Paul de Barras."

"Charmed to see you, monsieur." She gave him a passing glance—and passed him over. M. Barras bowed profoundly, kissed the beauty's hand with lingering attention, and withdrew into the general company.

He was a tall, squarely-built man with rugged features, a sensuous mouth, a fleshy nose, very handsomely dressed, with a very handsome opinion of himself. He was M. Robespierre's political opponent, and by his deportment and pacific speeches he had already gained some notoriety in the Assembly. He talked easily and willingly—which is but natural to a man with a handsome opinion of himself. The king, they said, was personally attached to M. Barras. His birth was unimpeachable.

“*Bonjour*, monsieur; charmed to see you.”

Térédia smiled very agreeably at Deputy Camille Desmoulins—she had met him at least six times in her life, which constituted old acquaintanceship in those days. He was cynical, witty, good-looking, and very happily married.

“You know M. Robespierre?” he said, stepping back to give that gentleman an opportunity of paying his respects to his hostess.

“Charmed to see you, monsieur,” said Térédia, dropping the “great” man a splendid reverence.

He'd come to her party after all. Camille Desmoulins had forcibly carried him off in his cabriolet. “I'll take no refusal,” he'd said gaily. “Why, man, you are working yourself to death. No cause is worth it. Remember Mirabeau—if he'd spared himself he would have died rich in years. A day, or half a day of pure folly——”

“Is it so pure?”

“I'll tell you to-morrow. Come and eat lobster and ices in the Fontenay woods. They're delicious. And the divine Térédia is incomparably the loveliest creature in creation. And you'll hear music, singing and laughter.”

Robespierre had shivered. He suffered from acute indigestion and he had a horror of “pleasure.” His pleasure had rather an ugly color—at that time. Not a mortal soul quite realized how ugly. On this particular morning—the day of Térédia's picnic—an absurd title for a sumptuous *al fresco* supper, served with every possible luxury—he'd woken with a dull pain in his head and a

tearing knife at his stomach. It had made him work all the better.

He had looked at Desmoulins, whom he designated a foolish ape—there were many foolish apes, according to Robespierre, disporting themselves in the House of Assembly. He hated listening to their inane chatter . . . chattering wouldn't do it—and then he'd flushed at sight of his overloaded desk. Work—work—work—like a mighty and remorseless hammer the edict of man crowded out blessed inspiration. (His vilest schemes were to him sacred.) . . . He had looked at his feverish hands—a little change might do him good, and bring him fresh inspiration . . . he'd have a look at the female monkeys. He laughed harshly.

"I'll come," he said, linking his arm within Desmoulins'. "The Fates know best . . . *mon ami*, what fools they are."

"Not at all, not at all," laughed Desmoulins. "I've a great respect for the ladies."

M. Robespierre proceeded with his protracted toilet, while Desmoulins kicked his heels in the next room, and turned over one or two of the member of Arras' books—very odd titles. Desmoulins put them down as if they'd burned him—he didn't like the ultra-modern, ranting theory . . . down with state, church, and king. . . . Moonshine, of course, the fixment of some poor devil's diseased brain, but, for all that, pernicious stuff. He wondered Robespierre allowed such truck in his room. "Ah, there you are," he said. "My horse is as fresh as a daisy." "Confound the dust," said Robespierre, turning up the collar of his gray linen coat. He was a finicky little man—and he hated dust. "A tender eater," as someone described him, at this period. He had his own little notions, Robespierre. Presently, driving through the famous and shady park of Fontenay, he broke into song:

The queen is in her dairy,
The king is in his forge.
The queen is making butter,
The king a master-key.

Desmoulins laughed. "No idea you were a minstrel," he said.

Robespierre unbuttoned his dust cloak. "I'm many things," he said, modestly. "One day I'll show myself to my best advantage."

"I hope I'll be present," said Desmoulins cheerily.

"God, look at that rut!"

They had been very nearly overturned. The little, high-swung cart, on two wheels, had leaned at a perilous angle, and Representative Robespierre had turned more than his usual sickly pea-green color. Desmoulins, who was a ruddy-skinned, healthy man, could not stand his honorable colleague's complexion. It reminded him, he said, of boiled mutton.

"I wish you'd be more careful; you oughtn't to be trusted with horses."

Desmoulins flicked a fly gently off the ear of his spirited chestnut. "So—gently, old boy," he said. "For the matter of that, I wonder if you are to be trusted with men."

Robespierre folded his coat very neatly on his knee. "Lambs," he bleated. "They are all lambs."

"Of a dangerous breed, sir."

"Not if you know how to manage them."

"That is just my point. The temper, last night, in the house was very hot."

"It'll get warmer—much warmer." He peered up at the charming perspective of the old Château de Fontenay, bedded in historical woods—a peaceful, rural, seigneurial picture of unobtrusive luxury. It was a rich man's place. The blue sky and the autumn foliage toned admirably. The terrace was thronged with a representative and rather mixed gathering. From the stable-yard you could hear the neighing of horses and the clatter of vehicles—there was life in the picture and old tradition. The sun caught the west front of the old mansion in a ruddy embrace. Ivy gleamed on the mellow red-brick walls, and the tall windows were elegantly festooned with white lace curtains.

By the gates—surmounted with the arms of the house of Fontenay—two tall lackeys, in the green-and-red liveries of the family, stood, very ornamentally fulfilling their duties. They bowed obsequiously as the light cart bowed through the gates.

Robespierre folded his hands together—they were gloved in palest lemon kid. “We’ll finish with all that,” he said pleasantly.

“Eh?”

“Nothing, nothing at all, my friend. Attend to your horse.”

“Aren’t you glad you came?”

“Delighted.”

Desmoulins wasn’t quite so sure of his own feelings. Truth to tell, he felt uncomfortable. He half regretted having enticed M. Robespierre to the party. His presence wasn’t as cheering as it ought to be. Lord bless him! On an occasion like this everyone ought to be friends. He felt convinced that the member for Arras had brought his and the “people’s” confounded cause with him. He rather loved to parade his political opinions. Desmoulins frowned. No doubt that the honorable member was a howling radical. It was he, and men of his inflated ideas, who fanned the worst tempers of the crowd. A crowd is peaceable until you excite it . . . once let it get out of bounds, and there’s the devil to pay.

A woman’s clear, silvery laugh seemed to challenge his thoughts. He recognized Madame de Lameth, coming down the drive attended by M. de Lameth.

“Isn’t it a perfect afternoon?” she cried. “You are late, monsieur.”

“Bonsoir, madame,” called Robespierre, raising his hat. “Never fear, we’ll catch you up.”

“Sir,” she said, drawing herself up to her full height—which wasn’t much—“I’ve never been afraid in all my life!” And she passed on.

“There,” said Desmoulins. “They are all like that. For sheer spirit and audacity give me a noble Frenchwoman.”

"Sir, I'll keep the pick of the bunch for myself."

"Ha-ha!" Handsome Desmoulins laughed loudly. (M. Robespierre was notoriously indifferent to the charms of lovely woman.) "That's right, man," he said. "Keep it up; live, eat and be merry! I warrant you the supper will be luscious. As to the ladies—look at them! Bless their hearts, I wish I had it in my heart to love them all."

"Rather less will satisfy me."

Again the tone of his companion's voice vexed Desmoulins. There was a kind of dull finality about it. In grim silence he flung the reins into the hands of a groom.

He stalked in front of Robespierre towards Térézia—standing at the head of a flight of wide marble stairs, reaching to the balcony terrace. The sun flamed around her.

"Remember, sir," said Desmoulins, "not to air your bear tricks here. We are not in the House. And the people—curse 'em—are on the other side of the world."

"I understand. My dear fellow, I always hope, whatever my political sentiments may be, that I can, on all occasions, conduct myself as a gentleman."

"No doubt, sir," said Desmoulins, politely.

You ought to have seen that strange crowd beneath the famous Fontenay chestnuts (faintly red) and how Térézia enjoyed herself; how her "*cher Devin*" shone in her smiles; how excellently well the village girls performed their dance; how prettily Claire Cardilac behaved; how *veuve* Boisgaloup—resplendent in *moiré antique*—turned the cold shoulder on Robespierre—he a glitter of sea-green cloth and silver lace; how everyone sported the tricolor colors and talked the politics of the day. No silence under the century-old trees—they very quiet in the September calm, looking down on this frolic (in the midst of revolution). Did the night-wind, hushing her breath, guess at the frightful secrets held in each man's heart? What a travesty of innocence! What a mockery of mirth! A few great ladies were present (by reason of policy).

By reason of policy they wore the national colors and conversed amiably with "insufferable upstarts."

The conversation was mainly frivolous, but underneath the banter and light talk ran a current of menace and gravity.

One or two of the men were within an inch of an open fight. (The Fontenay wine was strong.) They snarled at each other like very common and ugly curs. Little de Fontenay turned a pale lilac shade beneath his vivid hair—so terrified was he of scandal. He called for peace. "Gentlemen, gentlemen," said he in a voice he vainly tried to make easy, "at a feast of beauty and intellect angry words are out of place."

Térédia swept down on the gentlemen who were behaving as very ugly and common curs—she separated them by placing herself between the two. "Messieurs," she said, "I order you to love each other. Reconciliation is the sole excuse for bad temper."

The company applauded.

The would-be combatants with grudging good-nature shook hands. One of them fell on his knees and kissed the hem of his "benefactress's" embroidered robe. This pleased the benefactress enormously. She smiled happily, and smoothed both his ruffled hair and his ruffled spirits. It ended by the other gentleman suffering himself to be led away spouting poetry to an accompaniment of watery eyes:

All ye who dwell within the shade
Repine not. Nothing which is made,
Wind blown by God's decree
On earth or in the sea,
Is utterly lost or free.

He felt—so he declared—on the verge of ecstasy and celestial bliss. He would never, never forget the charm of the *châtelaine* of Fontenay, nor her compassion and sympathy. . . .

As Térédia afterwards declared to her husband, "A little tact makes the world go round."

CHAPTER XIV

MADAME DE FONTENAY'S evening party was entirely successful, in spite of M. de Fontenay having caught such a bad cold that he had been obliged ever since to keep to his own rooms. Some three weeks after, Térézia, who had no sympathy for her husband, told her friends in confidence (there's nothing which has a wider circulation) that little Devin was quite all right, as far as his health went, but that his nerves were shattered. He'd been "insulted" by his own tenants. They'd flung stones at him and used awful language. They'd threatened to burn up his ancestral castle—she felt *so* sorry for all their refined ghosts—and, what was worse, if they ever caught sight of him again, they'd wring his neck. Poor dear Devin *did* so fancy his neck. . . . Térézia raised her eyes to heaven, and piously committed her husband to the charge of his patron saint. Obviously (she said) the saint had instructed him to keep to his rooms, pending happier days. They were bound to come. She'd great hopes of the New Year. On New Year's Day they were going to give a splendid subscription ball in Paris, under royal patronage—for THE POOR. Well, could they in decency ask for more? Térézia promised that she'd dance her shoes into rags. Everyone applauded her charitableness. After that ball—tickets at two guineas apiece, not including supper—the decorations were to be on a very lavish scale—the wretched people would fall on their knees and pray for mercy. The question was—would the king forgive them? Certainly he would. The king was so long-suffering, and had a heart of gold. What a pity, said a wit, that he couldn't cut it into just pieces and distribute them amongst the people. For fault of bread they now

demanded gold! Gold for the people! A great many sober aristocrats laughed merrily at the wit's address. "But he was droll," they said.

Follow us up the Rue St. Honoré, and let us stop, if you please, nearly opposite the cross-road Rue Saint Floetintine, at the house of one Duplay, a carpenter. In these hard times he had let his rooms to Deputy Robespierre—two modest rooms over the courtyard—one he used as his bedroom and the other as his office. His secretary had the goodwill of a box-bed on the draughty landing, which also contained his desk and office stool. It is always best to begin humbly. (For the matter of that Deputy Robespierre retained his modest chambers until the day of his death. Somehow or other the honest carpenter had difficulty in letting them again. People didn't like to come in after his late tenant. He'd died quite a commonplace death—but all the same, people have their prejudices. In fact, the proprietor might have turned an honest penny if he'd charged a trifling sum and admitted the public to view the late Maximilien Robespierre's apartment, keeping the furnishing of the said rooms intact—the ruby lamp, swinging in the alcove over the narrow iron bedstead—the little writing-table, by the window; the citizen's shaving and powdering gowns, hanging negligently over the back of his high-backed, green rep-upholstered easy chair. . . .)

To return to the present, let us follow the seedy clerk into his master's presence.

He bowed humbly and handed him a visiting-card.

"What's that?" said Robespierre. "The devil, didn't I tell you not to disturb me!"

"The gentleman——"

"To blazes!"

"He is very insistent."

"They all are; wasps. I'll smoke 'em out presently."

He twisted round in his chair, scratching his neck—he was wearing his flowered chintz dressing-gown and his white pantaloons were very visible)—a trick of his which

gave the impression of some local irritation, heightened by the sight of a pimply eruption.

“‘Jean Lambert Tallien,’” he read, scanning the card. “‘Rédacteur.’ Show him in. And show him out the moment I sound my bell.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Citizen,” snapped Robespierre.

“Yes, citizen,” said the clerk, with a broad grin.

On the heels of the elated clerk (who’d quite expected a severe drubbing for his five-franc piece—the exact amount of the tall gentleman’s bribe) Tallien, in a swallow-tailed green coat—with brass buttons, and a primrose-tinted kerchief swathed round his lace-edged collar—advanced, with his usual imperturbability, into the centre of the room. Evidently he’d been listening outside the door—probably to save the secretary’s valuable time? Some men are so thoughtful.

“Good-morning, citizens,” he said pleasantly. “Quite a snap of frost in the air. You are comfortably warm in here.” (The vitiated air was heavy as lead.) “Don’t trouble to move. You can go, my man.”

Tallien wayed three erect fingers at the astonished clerk. Here was a gentleman of extraordinary *sang-froid*.

“Go to the devil,” rasped Robespierre. As he didn’t look up from his papers—he was scribbling as fast as he could go, with his nose almost touching his desk—either man could have taken the permission to himself. The clerk, being more at home, availed himself of his patron’s civility. In fact he vanished with considerable briskness.

Tallien swayed across the floor and closed the door carefully after him, stuffing the keyhole with a scrap of paper. “An eavesdropper is contemptible,” he remarked, “but just as well to avoid him.”

He pulled a chair from the wall and sat down, facing the light and Robespierre. He eyed him critically, as with his handkerchief he flicked at his boots. “Dusty weather,” he remarked. “It clashes with the frost. Times are out of gear.”

Robespierre dashed his pen on the table.

Tallien shook his head. "Gently," he said. "You've blotted the sheet. May be something valuable?"

"What's your business, citizen?"

Tallien pursed his thick lips as if on the point of whistling. However, he refrained. "You have got my card—there it is in front of your nose."

"Who are you?"

"A man of the people. My mother is alive. My father is dead—he died in the service of monsieur le vicomte de Rochenoir—one of his *valets-de-chambre*—he kept fifteen—great style—famous château—friend of du Barri, and Louis XV. . . . I hate the aristocrats."

The young man, from beginning his sentence with a certain flippancy, ended it on a note of vital simplicity and great earnestness.

"Rédacteur," said Robespierre, fingering his visitor's vulgar card. It was inscribed by hand—a great sprawling hand—Tallien's own.

"Of a great paper, *L'Ami des Citoyens*."

"Never heard of it."

"The first number appears the day after to-morrow, on the tenth of October. I just hit on the date by chance. I'm not in the least superstitious—but I never fly in the face of fate. That date, sir, flapped in my face as a pair of bat's wings in the dark. I had to fix on it—the tenth."

Robespierre trembled. He screwed his little mouth into a comical shape. Tallien dimly realized that he was trying to smile. A very ludicrous exhibition.

"The worst is over," said Tallien.

"Or beginning," said Robespierre, rubbing his hands.

"I'm twenty-four and I look older," continued Tallien. "I'm beholden to no man. I cut my father's calling as beneath my ambition. A man in a striped waistcoat, shirt-sleeves, a baize apron, holding a broom, cuts a ridiculous figure, even when opening the door for his master's light-o'-love. Such intrigues would never satisfy me. Like you, sir, I see—large."

He spread out his hands—very big hands—and, at the present moment, mottled and red. “Together we could do a stretch,” he said. He opened his mouth—a very wide mouth—to a surprising capacity. “Citizen, I’m as hungry as a hunter for my food. Only I insist on the right sort.”

He didn’t laugh. He put down his hands and he closed his mouth, shutting it tight as if afraid of a single word escaping him.

Robespierre nodded. He took up his pen and bit it. He put it down again and he took it up again and bit it. . . . “Further?”

“I started as one of Pantouche’s men. Quite a subordinate post. However, I learned a trick or two. Can turn a sentence pretty neatly.” His eyes twinkled. “Every scrap of knowledge is useful. From my late lamented parent’s lips I’ve memorized quite a store of facts dealing with aristocratic barbarities—or shall we say blunders? They’re dipped pretty deeply in guilt. Up to their necks, citizen. A life for a life. You’ll like it hot—the hotter the better. ‘The Citizens’ Friend’ will be nothing if not a firebrand. Given a likely wind we’ll soon have France fizzling. It’ll be a boon and blessing to man. A new form of blessing, too. That makes it all the more striking.”

“After Pantouche kicked you out of his place?——”

“Pantouche didn’t. I chucked him. I met a woman who gave me ideas—no matter—we’ll leave her outside the question—though she filled it entirely. An amazingly beautiful creature.”

“Damn you! Do you think I’ve time to listen to your dirty love affairs?”

“Wrong again. I’ve seen her twice and I’ve kissed her once—through the heart of a rose. Poetical? At a pinch I’ll run to poetry. One of my best friends is a consumptive poet. He writes the worst verse in Paris—’mazin’ clever. He’ll sub-edit the poets’ corner. The people like verse with an edge to it—saws *versus* knives.”

"I am to understand that you have left the printing office?"

"Exactly, sir,—a year ago precisely. The master's daughter wept. Fancy aspiring to me! Cheek! She might as well hope for a bloated aristocrat. . . . The beauty with the heart of a rose—no matter. We'll educate her—by blood. If you can make a gentleman out of a swineherd you can turn a lady into a slut. Neither you nor I, citizen, will stick at a point to gain a step. Each step is invaluable. At M. de Lameth's I've learned more in twelve months than during my five years' experience at Pantouche's."

"You don't edit a paper on nothing."

"Exactly."

"Go to the devil!"

"Exactly. I've practically sworn to serve you—with my heart, soul, and body." Tallien, who had never once raised his voice from a uniform drawl, here flicked his boots with his handkerchief.

Robespierre got up and faced him. He stood over him, peering down at his vast complacency. "You think a precious deal of yourself, young man."

"All that and more."

"Why come whining to me? I can't help you."

Tallien shrugged his shoulders. "Isn't that a trifle ambiguous? To true patriots riches and poverty are the same thing. We all share and share alike. Equality, fraternity, liberty."

He repeated the last words very smoothly. "*Citoyen*," he said, looking up into the other's twitching face, "in a very little while we'll be rich—and they" (he again swept his right hand with a large, circular gesture), "and they'll be poor. We'll take everything else, God willing, and leave them their cursed pride. May it feed them. Amen."

Robespierre sat down again. "Continue," he said.

"I want to secure my subscribers. To tell you the truth, I only want the best people."

Robespierre nodded.

"Let them rant and say what they like, you, citizen, have your finger and thumb on the artery vein. You need only press here and press there—with the help of the press, of course—and your victory is a foregone conclusion. Citizen, I take the liberty of admiring you immensely."

Robespierre chuckled. "What impertinence!" he said.

"It's what you want. It's what we all want. Your sanctimonious, mealy-mouthed courtiers wouldn't be worth a grain o' salt, let alone a bag o' gold."

"A bag o' gold?"

"Exactly. And a pretty stiff one, too. Nothing under two hundred pieces." Tallien rose and laid his hand on the great man's shoulder. "Whereupon I'm your property, body, soul and honor."

"I haven't the money."

"My contributors will have the use of a popular organ to air their complaints, their prejudices—*enfin*, their ambitions. The paper will circulate in the classes the honorable deputy" (Tallien inclined his head ever so slightly) "desires to reach. Believe me, the written word has a stronger attraction for the unlettered classes than the most brilliant flow of oratory. They'll master a word of print—say a flaring headline—with difficulty, and it'll sink deep into their elementary souls."

"I haven't the money."

"My policy is your policy. My child your child—a little pathos is such a help. I'll give tears a good place." He glanced out of the window. "Presently we'll see a red glow in the sky. 'A red sky at night is the shepherd's delight.' You're a shepherd. As a humble instrument I'll stand by you."

Robespierre detached a bunch of keys from his waistcoat pocket. He unlocked and opened a drawer.

"I'll bring round the first proofs to-morrow at eight sharp."

Robespierre banged to the drawer. "I haven't the money, I tell you," he said huskily.

"Good-morning, monsieur. I regret infinitely that I have trespassed on monsieur's valuable time."

Tallien had reached the door before a heavy thud stopped him.

Robespierre, with protruding eyes and a violently working throat, had twisted round in his chair and flung a bag of gold pieces on the floor.

"Take it," he said, "and be gone! To-morrow at ten."

Tallien stooped and, with a good-natured smile, he picked up the money, opened the cord, looked inside, and weighed it carefully in his hand before slipping it into the breast-pocket of his green tail-coat.

For one instant his eyes measured his fellow-conspirator. "We mustn't waste time," he said, cheerily, "I'll come at eight. I can wait. I can always wait."

Very gently he opened and closed the door behind him. He left pandemonium behind him. It was rarely Citoyen Robespierre lost control of his feelings, but when he did, he left nothing to the imagination. How he walked. nay, how he skipped, how he hopped, how he danced up and down his dingy parlor, a prey to ungovernable excitement! His face was drawn into a thousand fantastic lines. He snapped his fingers; he chuckled; he laughed; he sang:

The queen is in her dairy,
The king is in his forge.
The queen is making butter,
The king a master-key.

CHAPTER XV

OCTOBER, after a preliminary deluge of sleet and torrential rain, had settled into the bleak rawness of early winter. The autumnal leaves flew fast in Paris. No less fast than the "written word." Tallien could glory in the success of his production (even Térézia blushed as she scanned a secreted copy). No lady demeaned herself in those days by reading radical organs. The Cardilacs, good honest folk, would have been justly horrified if they had known that some few yards from their savory pot of morning coffee fluttered one of these abhorred sheets in the hands of an honored guest.

To please Claire, whom they adored, the Cardilacs accepted her friend. They never asked questions. Truth to tell, when she pleased Térézia could bear herself with becoming modesty and charm. She looked very innocent, when her arms circled her "dear Claire" before dear Claire's exceptional parents. Sometimes in the privacy of her room, to her maid Christina, Térézia would ease her stifled feelings by using naughty language. "Was there ever such a pair of old fools as the Cardilacs!" she would laugh.

In those days Térézia reveled in the high wind of love and courtship. Scandalous stories about her would have been popular reading in Paris if they hadn't been eclipsed by the threatening storm of revolution.

Secretly, greatly enjoying the huge joke, Robespierre, Tallien, Fénélon and company blew the bellows. When the fire of hate showed some slight deviation, some faint abatement, these gentlemen worked as galley slaves to avert "disaster."

They looked at the dripping skies; they scanned the faces of anxious women, infuriated women, mad women; of

men born to obey (after a fashion); of youths drifting into the whirlpool; and away, far above them, in some starry splendor, they saw the *ancien régime*, represented by the disdainful aristocrats who hitherto had held undisputed sway in the good land of France. Looking up, dogs howl.

Térézia followed Tallien's career with unprecedented interest. In her heart of hearts she was superstitious. She had always laughed at "silly fables" — yet she respected what she didn't understand. Térézia never respected Tallien. Are we to conclude that she understood him?

Claire looked pale in these dark autumn days when the wind whistled over the thinning trees of Paris. She went often to Mass. Sometimes she would induce the lazy Térézia to accompany her. "Prayers are so comforting," said Claire.

With her head devoutly bent over her rosary, Térézia would yawn.

One fine day "she couldn't stand it any longer." With a great show of unwillingness and really unselfish behavior she said she must return home to look after "her great big tyrant."

"You are an angel," said Claire.

"I am sure I am," answered the unquenchable Térézia, when seated in her traveling carriage. "Christina, have you my jewel-box safe? The rabble may rob us, remember. I have taken a bag full of buns to fling at the leaders. Isn't it a joke? Good-by, angel. Take care of yourself. My deep respects to madame your mother. A thousand grateful thanks, M. Cardilac, I have so enjoyed my visit," and away she galloped. Térézia never did anything quietly.

She didn't go home; she spent a rather disgraceful week-end; she reveled in love and kisses and grew beautiful as the morning sun. Christina played propriety. Poor Christina—as her mistress grew more physically perfect in these bacchantic orgies, she no less visibly aged. It

sickened her heart to see the waste of things. Instead of upbraiding Térézia and calling her a very plain name (which Térézia would have suffered with a child's blank stare) she rounded on the unfortunate Devin. If he hadn't been such a woebegone husband he would not have had such a woebegone wife! What was the matter with the world? asked Christina.

The months leaped ahead. The Royal Family of France had to face another year of indecision, much insult, some little gladness—every now and again an echo from the outside world to fill the queen with pride. Austria would help her, Prussia was arming. England was coming forward—blessed, blessed news!

The putrid "rags" doubled and trebled their circulation; they fluttered all over France. Young Tallien was coining money. He was head over ears in plots and counterplots foiled by one man's inability to die.

The talk of the hour was Mirabeau's lion courage and extraordinary vitality. Everyone knew him by sight, the disease-riddled face, the flaming eyes, the ridiculous nose. Men doffed their hats to him if to none other. At that critical moment he was the actual ruler of demented France. Térézia had quoted to the sick man Desmoulins' *mot*, as proof of his ready wit: "To reach sanity, one must wallow in madness." (Térézia was never word-perfect in her quotations—she could remember the substance of things but never the matter.)

April shone gently over Paris. Mirabeau, in spite of his fierce desire to live, had to give up the struggle and die as well as he could. He managed at least to tide over Fools' Day. On April the second, somewhere about eight in the morning, "he fell asleep."

To a man who has spent the greater part of his life in ceaseless toil, incessant struggle, with a vision of terrible clearness, can death have a sweeter reading?

Térézia came to town for the funeral, and insisted on her husband being present. "Everyone will be there.

There never was a more popular death," she said—"I mean people are wild with sorrow, from the king down to the bottle-washer. You are a coward, Devin! Nobody would dream of killing you! It wouldn't be worth the exertion." Already the little marquise, in the radiancy of her eighteen full-blown years—she looked older than her age; her full, round figure might well have passed for twenty and more—was instituting legal proceedings against Marquis Red-Pate—she supposed he had a title to his own hair? . . .

When Térézia was away, amusing herself, Christina was left at home in charge of the baby—the very image of his papa, which his mamma took as a personal affront. Truth to tell, both parents took a very perfunctory interest in little Georges. He was a good-tempered child with red cheeks, the paternal hair, and round blue eyes. He was just beginning to talk. Christina listened to him with the greatest attention. Térézia would be mildly amused at her infatuation. The boy had his own nurse, of course. He didn't care a snap of his chubby fingers for Marie, the bailiff's daughter—it is always well to employ your own people. Marie was a strong-minded young woman (who took in *L'Ami des Citoyens*). Christina loathed her. "I don't care," said Térézia, when her faithful old nurse warned her against having such a person in the house. "They are all alike. Not a soul opens a gate for me any longer. Life is too short to worry over trifles."

And off she'd dash into Paris or to Bois Vert or Gros-Bois, Château d'Hyère, or anywhere her fancy or her position led her. The beautiful *châtelaine* of Fontenay-des-Roses was popular. She was "so ornamental," they said. "So good-tempered," said another. "So amusing," said a third. Térézia had a way of telling wicked little stories, transparent as daylight . . . it was the fashion to play with words, morals, religion, royalty, politics—such a jumble!

When the tangle was at its worst Louis recalled M. Necker from Berne, and reinstated him as his financial adviser. For at least three weeks after that astute gentle-

man's acceptance of office and return to Paris, the queen ceased packing her boxes, ceased to weep (in secret) and entered briskly into the details of butter-making, varied by dream-making, joy-making or other airy fantasies. Necker issued new bills—not blue but green, we fancy—and new taxations. The people continued to growl. They were still hungry and very unsatisfied. Then in April, as we've said, after Fools' Day, Mirabeau achieved his departure from life in great style. His death was eloquent. In the very moment of dissolution, when his speech forsook him, with appalling courage he traced certain letters, on a sheet of paper propped up in front of him by his sister. . . .

In the merry month of May Térézia came to town. The queen sang in her parlor—M. Necker and Madame Necker entertained—and the people of Paris had determined to have their king in their midst. In fact, a great body of them had escorted him from the palace of Versailles to the palace of the Tuileries. They'd taken no refusal. They pinned on him a huge tricolor badge and they drove him in front of them—much as a sheep to the slaughter. He had white horses harnessed to his top-heavy coach—his best wig on—the queen beside him—a silent, proud queen—and the royal children opposite, in pretty white dresses, one carrying a top, the other nursing a doll. They chatted together. . . .

Térézia, as usual, stayed with the Cardilacs. She'd come to say good-by. She'd made up her mind to spend the early summer months in England. England—they said—was such a quiet place. In fact, heaps of her friends, who wanted to rest, were going too. She hoped the Cardilacs would join her. They could see all the London sights together, before going on to Bath. The waters would do them all good.

Claire thought it a splendid idea. She was anxious to get away. Her parents didn't look well. In the meanwhile she and Térézia spent their time in shopping, in confidential chats (Claire was officially affianced to M. le

cousin—and it was the merry month of May); in divers theatre and small dinner-parties. Big dinners were out of the question—provisions were expensive and everyone's movements erratic. "Here to-day and gone to-morrow," sang Térézia, idly touching her friend's harp in the back drawing-room.

"My dear," she said, "how untidy everything is! Look at that plant, it is unwatered. And your mother's work-basket looks as if the cats had used it for a cradle."

"We are packing," said Claire.

"When I run away I'll run neatly," said Térézia.

"Don't say that, darling."

"It's the truth. We are all behaving like cowards. There's no real danger."

"Everyone says——"

"You dear, darling donkey. Come here and I'll kiss you. I'm rather sorry that I missed Georges Boissaloup. How was he looking?"

"As usual. He is always pleasant and kind."

Térézia sighed. "There are some things a woman won't forgive. No, I'll never look at him again."

Claire looked up. "He's coming to-morrow."

"You receive him. I'll go upstairs."

The bell rang.

"There he is," said Claire.

"How exciting! Fly downstairs, and tell him I'm not at home."

Térézia spent a quarter of an hour, fidgeting round the untidy drawing-room—the curtains were down—before Claire returned, looking indignant.

"Well? What did he say? Wasn't he furious? Surely he gave you his respectful compliments to carry upstairs to your obstinate friend?"

Térézia danced round the room in high glee. "Serves him right," she said. "Did he bring his friend, Lieutenant Bonaparte?"

"No. It wasn't Georges at all."

"You nasty, deceiving wretch! And I'm dying for

amusement. Who was it? Old Ravoral? Or poor dear Alexandre de Lameth?"

"No, a big vulgar creature whom I've never set eyes on. He sent in his card and he asked to see *you*—on business, he said. I had quite a difficulty in getting rid of him. In these times one can't be too careful with strangers."

"What was his name?" asked T  r  zia, slowly.

"Citizen Jean Lambert Tallien. Here's his card."

T  r  zia took it. "And you sent him away," she said in a strangely subdued tone.

"Naturally."

"It's fate. When *are* we to meet again?"

"You know that man?"

T  r  zia clasped Claire's hand within her own. "He's the greatest friend I've got."

"T  r  zia! He wasn't a gentleman."

"What a calamity! A year—and a year—and a year. It's three years since we met. Three long eventful years! doesn't time *crawl*? He's got the patience of Job. Fancy loving a woman to distraction and looking her up once a year! Such patience deserves a prize. . . . What'll he get? What'll we get? Claire, don't stare at me, I'm not mad! I never was saner in my life. Sooner or later we all touch the impossible. For heaven's sake don't stare at me, but get a jug of water and water that miserable plant! Life's precious. Don't you realize it?—precious, precious!"

Nevertheless Claire continued to stare at her friend with astonishment. She'd never seen T  r  zia so wildly excited before.

CHAPTER XVI

TÉRÉZIA dressed herself thoughtfully. She considered gay colors were out of season. She chose a sober dove-gray gown with a broad black satin ribbon round her waist. From the conservatory she ordered a bunch of white carnations—these she thrust into her bosom; a string of pearls round her bare throat; a little black hat on her head with one white plume; it was a becoming hat. Térézia smiled at herself in her looking-glass—a faithful friend. Anyhow, God be thanked, these strenuous times had not robbed her of her beauty. Some people under adversity lose all their looks. Térézia could remember quite twenty women to prove her point. What was the good of worrying?

Drawing on her pale-gray gloves, she passed into the nursery. Opposite his evil-faced nurse little Georges was eating bread and butter. He eyed his mamma gravely.

“Where are you going to?” he asked.

“To Paris, my little one.”

“What are you going to do in Paris?”

“I am going to buy you a toy.”

“May I have a rocking-horse?”

“Much too big! How could poor little mamma carry a rocking-horse?”

“Well then, a guillotine.”

“A what?”

“A guillotine.”

“What is that?”

“A lovely new game. You chop head off, so.” The little boy thumped a chubby fist on the nursery table.

The evil-faced nurse smiled.

For the first time Térézia felt unaccountably frightened.

On her return from Paris she would dismiss her nurse. Christina would love to look after the boy.

Térédia kissed her son almost affectionately. "Good-by, little angel," she said. "Look after him, Marie. I will be back probably this evening."

The woman nodded. "Very well," she said sullenly.

The road to Paris lay deserted. Never had the Fontenay carriage passed with greater ease along the miserably inadequate highway. Nothing hindered the *citoyenne's* entrance into the town, where, to all appearances, proper order reigned.

Térédia, with curiosity, sharpened by this new dull sensation of fear, looked carefully around her. The shops were all open, the street hawkers cried their wares, the newsboys ran their errands on noiseless bare feet. One of them flung a bill at Térédia's feet. It was an announcement that a ball would take place to-morrow evening (at popular prices) at a well-known Paris house of entertainment. . . . So people danced in Paris?

Térédia's quick eyes scanned the passers-by. Everyone seemed in a hurry. At most, acquaintances passed each other with a scant nod, a quick "good morning," or a quicker glance. . . . There came a party of young people, gay young people; who, as they glanced at the Fontenay carriage, broke into still louder laughter. A hasty brush dipped in some dull paint had obliterated the forbidden cipher and coronet. One young man pointed to the dappled grays; they also were shorn of aristocratic distinction, in rude harness—all their richly emblazoned trappings gone. Térédia had taken a tender interest in her own and her husband's insignia of rank; no, she had not spared the coronets.

The group of young people dancing, shouting, singing, and yet withal exhibiting the undeniable grace of youth, passed up the quiet street; Térédia noticed that the girls were tricked out in garlands, and, of course, the inevitable tricolor cockades.

She noticed on the opposite side of the road a young gentleman, who wore in his button-hole a knot of white satin ribbon. She had half a mind to stop the carriage and ask him what this novel decoration was intended to convey. He of the white knot, looking neither to the right nor left, swung past her carriage at a fine martial pace. Térézia tapped her delicate fingers on the framework of her elegant equipage. Indeed the world must be entirely mad when she ceased to command attention.

They clattered past the Tuileries. Towards the street all the palace windows were shuttered. No doubt their majesties preferred the seclusion of the garden front. A great many soldiers paced the outer courtyard; no heavy coaches in waiting. Why, at Versailles at times the carriages, two deep, had extended from one angle of the huge building to another.

There had always been arrivals and departures at court; petitioners desiring royal favors; those who had the privilege to wait on royalty, and who never let an opportunity pass to show their respectful homage; others whom the glitter of court life attracted as so many human bees around the honey-pot; and the liveried servants of the crown, the countless satellites, the lesser nobility who bowed to the greater—where had the astonishing crowd vanished?

They drove down the Rue St. Honoré, the shopping centre of Paris. There was a frightful conformity in the shop windows. Every mortal thing, from hats to cheese, sported the national colors. Térézia with a yawn leaned back in her carriage and scanned her ivory tablets.

She touched the cord attached to the coachman's arm.

Baptiste pulled up his horses with a jerk. A woman pushing a barrow of vegetables had a narrow escape of being knocked down. She voiced popular opinion in a flow of abusive language. A little crowd gathered.

"Drive to the *Three Musketeers*. I have not very much to do. The horses must rest if I return home this eve-

ning." Térézia looked at her little jeweled watch. "Be quite ready at six o'clock."

"Citoyenne——?"

Click went the carriage door, and the *citoyenne's* daintily-shod foot touched the pavement.

"Madame is walking!" exclaimed the horrified coachman, in his astonishment forgetting the new regulations.

The crowd hissed.

"Yes," said Térézia, smoothly, "I have business in this quarter. I can always take a hackney coach." She waved her hand. "Go," she said impatiently, "I have no more orders to give you."

She turned and tripped away, rather well pleased with herself. No woman of quality walked the streets alone—it was highly indecorous. Nothing mattered in times of revolution. Térézia intended finding out things. She had come to Paris to test public feeling. Boxed up at the Cardilacs' she might just as well have stayed at home and listened to Devin's boring prognostications. Devin knew less than nothing of the political situation—he only repeated "old wives' tales," tales bordering on the incredible. What nonsense about killing the aristocrats! Why the whole world would cry shame on the murderers.

Secure in her indomitable right to live, Térézia, with scant consideration of what her friends might say, passed over the Place du Louvre and made straight towards the Café Royal.

As we all know, it has a charming central position occupying a corner frontage facing the Palais Royal and looking up towards the present Avenue de l'Opéra. In Térézia's time the neighborhood was still a labyrinth of indifferent streets.

With her easy swinging movement she entered the establishment. A waiter came forward and stared at her.

She smiled. "It is nicer outside. I will sit here." She chose a pretty little green chair beside a tiny marble table, one of many on the pavement.

It was rather a slack business hour. Except for two or three customers Térézia had the place to herself.

She ordered coffee and cakes and the *Moniteur*.

The white-aproned man, still staring, took her order. Then he went to the proprietor.

The proprietor shrugged his shoulders. At present people were not so particular, he said. The *citoyenne* did no harm (from a window he peeped at a certain little black hat, a gorgeous display of golden hair and a pretty white feather)—on the contrary, she might attract custom.

Térézia sat on her little marble table, agreeably engaged in watching the passers-by. She knew no one. How strange that in the course of a year or so society should have changed beyond recognition. Bah! Paris, ruled by the commonalty, was no better than a provincial town. Once she caught sight of a man who loved her very much—she had no wish to be discovered. Under cover of the *Moniteur*, which the waiter had brought her, she hid her amused face. Poor Adolf, how distracted he would have been to know what he had missed! She was not exactly tired of Adolf, but his star was unpropitious.

Térézia had rarely felt so elated. She was doing a brave thing, sitting in the heart of Paris utterly unprotected.

A fat man—probably a shopkeeper—with a leering hideous face turned round to look at her again. Térézia's face was absolutely unemotional.

"The *citoyenne* is too pretty to sit alone," he remarked, coming forward. "May I have the pleasure?" He indicated an empty seat at her little table.

"Certainly," said Térézia, a little wearily, "if it pleases the *citoyen*."

"You are a stranger to Paris?" he asked.

"I arrived this morning."

"I have lived here for six months, six glorious months. We can be proud to-day, we citizens, of enlightened France."

"I am afraid I am very ignorant." Térézia sighed, and played with her little silver coffee-spoon.

He spat on the ground. "*Garçon*—here, a cognac."

The dull-faced waiter very promptly served the fat man. In passing Térézia he gave her a knock. Perhaps it was entirely accidental.

Her cavalier gave the toast of the hour: "Down with royalties, down with aristocrats." He smiled facetiously and put out a splay hand, none too well-kept. "The beautiful *citoyenne* is of the same opinion?"

"Of course. The aristocrats have grown impossible."

"Well spoken, my dear. Still I have it in my heart to pity them. Before we hunted them, now we gather them in, keep them close, very close. Every true citizen of France wishes to hug a little aristocrat." He threaded his splay fingers and suddenly pulled his hands apart. "A life for a life. You read your holy office, mademoiselle?"

"Titles are out of place. Are we not friends?" She smiled. "Do tell me what is actually going on in Paris. All seems so quiet and so orderly, one reads of no particular riots" (she rustled her paper), "and yet the air is electric."

"You have hit the truth. Men are working day and night, good, brave men, men whose names will live for ever—whom our children's children will rise and bless" (what with the cognac and his own emotions the fat man grew unctuously sentimental)—he grabbed at Térézia's hand.

"Who are you, my pretty one?"

"A woman obviously alone and in need of protection."

He worked his tongue round his mouth as if chewing a subtle thought. "I'll tell you frankly it can't be done. I have got the devil of a wife. She is not in the provinces, worse luck."

Térézia raised dangerously imploring eyes to heaven. "I am an honest woman," she said simply. "Tell me, is Paris safe for women in these days?"

"You could bed in a thieves' cabin and fear no harm,

provided you come of an honorable stock. There is war to the knife on the aristocrats" (he lowered his voice), "and on the Royal house."

"I have heard," said Térézia, "that the deputies are not of one mind."

"Nor likely to be. The top dog wins."

"Whom do you favor?"

"Three."

"Their names?"

"Robespierre, a fine hard-working patriot. His nose is of no delicate mechanism—he'll stand a deal, will Robespierre. Ever since the lamentable death of Mirabeau that young man has come forward, rushed forward, impelled by the voiceless soul of France. Thirty-five odd millions behind him."

"Yes?"

"And a handful of enemies to vanquish. Death to the aristocrats! *Garçon*, another cognac."

Overcome by patriotism, the fat man had ceased to regard Térézia as a possible distraction. His eyes took another expression, less dangerous to herself but infinitely more menacing to the order she represented.

Dully Térézia realized that Devin had touched the truth. These people would stop at nothing. She realized the hatred behind the man's words.

"And the others?" she said.

"There is Marat."

"I have heard of him."

"And Tallien——"

"I have heard of him."

"There is a man for you! He has both spirit and enterprise. He is a born financier."

"Indeed?"

"By God's grace, yes! And he does not tax the people. The *noblesse* have to pay through their noses. Passports are expensive matters nowadays. They come to him cringing, paying their all." (He tapped his fleshy hand on the little marble table.) "The public repositories are get-

ting over-crowded. I had occasion to call at *citoyen* Tallien's private office last week. A printing office—*hein!* A legal bureau of Public Safety—*hein!* Fiddlesticks!—a jeweler's shop, an establishment of genuine antique and costly bric-à-brac. There they lay, the spoils of the Philistines, all higgledy-piggledy on the floor and shelf, gleaming to the tune of millions—millions, I say! France will benefit——”

“——And Tallien!”

“Ha! ha! But you are perfectly right, my beauty. Why, the fellow is an arch-thief.”

“But a good patriot.”

“None better, his zeal is famous. They say——”

“Yes?”

“It is a secret.”

“No matter.”

“I wouldn't care to risk my neck, not even to please you, my pretty one. (To the devil with Angélique!)”

“Just for once.”

“You could turn any man's head. I have heard it emphatically stated that no more aristocrats are to leave France——”

“And a good business too——”

“That is, as soon as the matter can be properly legalized, the whole lot of 'em get tucked in prison, snugly put away, with no respect for either age or person. The whole blessed lot.”

“Then you must first build your cages. Why, the prisons are far too small for such a select company.”

“Gently, gently. There is an idea of easing his majesty's prisons. Fellowship they say gives room—up to a certain point; you cannot ask impossibilities of God or man.”

Térédia sighed.

“Are you going to kill the poor creatures?” she asked a little doubtfully.

“You are a clever little woman. That is exactly what we intend doing.”

"Have they any definite plans?"

"They don't speak of them. No definite plan is spoken of until it has actually taken place."

"I understand."

"So much I can tell you. Look out for next year."

Térézia laughed. "*Mon Dieu*," she said cheerfully, "not before next year? Why, that gives them breathing space."

She rose.

"Don't go."

"I must," she said. "As it is, my *patronne* will scold me severely. It is wrong to gossip during business hours."

"Where do you live?"

Térézia smiled very sweetly. She opened her little bag and extracted a blank visiting-card. "Has the *citoyen* a pencil?"

He handed her one.

She bent over the little table and wrote in a very clear writing, "Marthe Brun, 10, Rue de Babylone." "A *troisième, citoyen*. If you ask for Marthe the milliner you will be sure to find me."

She held out her hand.

"You will look me up?" she said.

He stumbled to his feet. He made some remark, probably to the effect that the *citoyenne* could be assured of his future interest in her welfare. The *citoyenne* in the meanwhile had disappeared in the crowd and vanished from his slightly hazy view.

The fat man clutched at the little marble table, and, with protruding eyes, he stared at the bit of pasteboard lying before him.

CHAPTER XVII

WITH a rapidly-beating heart Térézia threaded her way through the unsavory streets. She walked quickly, possessed by the horrible idea that if she didn't put an appreciable distance between herself and "that awful vampire" the said vampire would track her down and maybe there and then drink his fill of aristocratic blood.

Térézia had long ago forgotten that it might be a moot question if dear papa's lineage and dear mamma's ancestry were of such high degree. She made open fun of the Fontenay family annals, but she looked upon her own birth as unimpeachable. Now, hastening through the familiar streets, she felt her heart burn at the insult offered to her class and sex.

In her hurry she collided with a gentleman. He raised his hat and benignly asked madame's pardon. He looked a sober, kind-hearted old fellow. A lawyer probably? A doctor maybe? Anyhow, an honest citizen of dishonest, pandemonic Paris.

In the Rue de Clichy Térézia paused in her headlong flight. She looked around rather doubtfully, flushed and much too beautiful to walk alone. And yet she did not attract undue attention. No one apparently had time to follow her or to speculate on her errand.

Térézia found herself outside a coach-builder's premises. The stock-in-trade lay about in the dim yard beyond; a wheel over the signboard gave to all and sundry the distinguished information that Sullivan et Cie., purveyors to the court, also accepted orders from less distinguished patrons.

She suddenly remembered the paucity of the harness-

room at Fontenay. She really couldn't any longer drive about with those wretched farm traces.

She mounted the steps and opened the shop door.

An elderly man in a leather apron, drilling holes in a stout pair of reins, looked up indifferently.

"Good morning, *citoyenne*," he said, going on with his work.

"May I sit down? I'm so tired." Térézia placed a bundle of whips on the floor and took possession of the only seat in the shop, a three-legged stool. "It is warm to-day, and I am doing my shopping on foot, to save my horses." She fanned herself with her handkerchief. A faint breath of lilac broke through the stench of oil and seasoned leather.

The man continued his work. "The master is out," he volunteered at length.

"Can you take my orders?"

"I might" (surlily).

"Then get up properly and listen to me!"

"Eh?"

He opened big eyes and smiled. "The *citoyenne* is in a hurry. It is quite a phase of the day. All our customers are in a hurry. Never had a busier season."

"No doubt your master is gratified."

"Eh?"

Térézia beat her little, daintily-shod foot on the sawdust floor. "I can go elsewhere," she said, angrily.

"If it is a carriage you want, we can't book another order until next year."

"I have fifteen carriages at home."

He opened his eyes. "*Ma foi! a ci-devant* aristocrat?"

"Don't be rude. I am as good a patriot as you any day, my man. I want you to make me as soon as possible a plain set of double harness. What's the idea, I wonder? Extravagance, I call it——"

"That proves it——" he interrupted.

"Proves what?"

"You are an aristocrat."

"What else could I possibly be? Have you no eyes in your head? Monsieur, there are aristocrats and aristocrats. The good people of France have no reason to dislike the name of Fontenay."

"I've heard of the name, *ma foi!*"

Térédia smiled. "I am rather famous," she admitted modestly.

The man flung the reins over the counter, and fetched the order-book, looking sharply at his customer.

"How much do you want to pay?"

"Oh, I don't care."

"Fifty, sixty, three hundred francs?"

"I don't care."

"Good leather runs into a deal of money."

"The best quality, please."

The man booked the order. "To be paid on delivery this day month, at the Château de Fontenay. Good morning, *citoyenne*." He turned briskly away.

"Oh!" gasped Térédia. "I've never in all my life paid ready money. Is that also a new regulation? Dear Robespierre must have very little to do."

"Many people run away nowadays without paying at all."

Térédia deposited two one-hundred-franc bills on the counter. "On account," she said loftily. "Give me a receipt."

"Eh! but you are a quick one!"

"When it pleases me, citizen." She smiled.

The coachbuilder's assistant signed the receipt. He was a strong, burly man, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes.

Térédia wandered leisurely across the shop and looked out of the back door; it opened on to the yard. Under a rough shed stood a monster coach, brand-new, extremely effective and, no doubt, extremely heavy.

"That's a handsome carriage," she remarked, pleasantly, "and quite a new model. What do you call it?"

"A berline."

"Who's ordered it?"

"A Baroness Korff."

"Don't know her."

"I think the family is German, or maybe Scandinavian——"

Térédia pricked up her ears. "How interesting," she said. "Can I look at it closer?"

"Why not?"

He followed her across the yard and gallantly assisted her into the coach. (Térédia had a mighty power over men!) "Enter, madame," he said politely, "and feel for yourself the luxury of the upholstery. Why, a queen couldn't want a better carriage, let alone a baroness."

Térédia settled herself on the front seat, and declared that it was a dream. "But it is a heavy carriage all the same," she added, "and I rather pity the poor post-horses."

"Ten good horses and two or three crack postilions, and she'll dance out of France in a jiffy."

Térédia laughed. "Really it does you all credit. Look what capacious pockets, and here is a place for a carafe. And four footstools—why so many?"

"She doesn't travel alone."

"No, no, I suppose she doesn't. Well, anyhow, she is a fortunate lady."

Térédia clambered out of the heavy carriage. She had quite forgotten her fatigue. For the moment she was genuinely jealous of Baroness de Korff's fine conveyance. She wouldn't have minded it herself, nor "dancing out of Paris in a jiffy." Paris was a horribly iniquitous hole.

Térédia put her little lilac-scented handkerchief to her nose. "I hope your client doesn't mind the smell of fresh paint," she said.

"That'll pass off. The gentleman is in no hurry to have his order delivered. We are keeping the carriage until required."

"Gentleman?" inquired Térédia.

"The most insufferable gentleman, ma'am."

"How so?"

"Tastes differ, I know. Personally I've never stomached pretty feathered cocks of foreign extraction, prating this, prating that. There is nothing so wearisome as a man with nothing to do except to offer good advice."

"Indeed, you are right," said Térézia, thinking how aptly this applied to Devin. "It makes them so quarrelsome and interfering."

"Just so—in and out of the workshop at all hours of the day, arguing, directing, insisting."

"I wonder who she is?"

The man swung a huge key on his finger, which he had taken from the coach-house door. "The same idea has struck me," he said.

"You have made no inquiries?"

"No."

"Nor your master?"

"Why should he? He has been handsomely paid. It is no business of ours." He looked at her with his merry twinkle. "Don't you be building mares' nests out of a plain carriage."

Térézia liked the look of this honest craftsman. He had splendid muscles, and, more than that, splendidly broad principles. She returned slowly into the shop, which struck cold and damp after the sunny courtyard. Térézia shivered . . . surely *he* wouldn't wish to kill aristocrats? She wanted to put the question to him, but she thought it wiser to refrain. A pleasant, humorous smile may hide unknown depths of villainy.

"Good-by, and thank you so much," she said, tripping out of the shop door. In a minute she was back again, asking rather breathlessly, "Where am I?"

"Eh?"

The man had resumed his work. "In the Rue de Clichy, No. 27—where else?"

"I have lost my way," she explained pathetically.

"You'll find it again. Turn to the right and you are sure to find it. You couldn't miss it." He followed her to the door.

"Thank you," said Térézia, rather doubtfully.

As luck would have it, the same benign old gentleman she had noticed on leaving the Café Royal, came leisurely up the street. He carried a bag in his hand.

"Who is that?" she asked, on a sudden impulse, pointing towards the leisurely citizen. "I know his face. Where can I have seen it?"

"That's more than I can answer, *citoyenne*. As it happens, however, he's one of the customers. A Doctor Guillotin. An inventor, and a kind, clever man, they say."

"He looks very kind," said Térézia, thoughtfully. Where had she heard that name? Then she smiled. Her nerves were playing her stupid pranks! What an odd coincidence! Dear little Georges had asked her to bring him a toy with some such name. Who knows? the good doctor might have invented the very game!

"*Au revoir*," she said. "You'll let me have the harness as soon as possible?"

She walked slowly towards the river, searching for a hackney cab. She felt very hungry and tired. In her deepest dejection her good star gleamed in a leaden sky. Whom should she sight again but Adolf! He was a long way off, but this time she ran after him.

"Adolf!" she cried. "Adolf!"

And, as the gods rarely give half-measure, the young man heard her voice, above the medley of traffic and his own grave thoughts, and promptly turned round. Térézia felt like a shipwrecked mariner who suddenly feels land under his feet. She caught hold of her lover's arm, and before he could ask a single question she told him she was famished, and that after a good lunch she would be quite ready to hear all he had to tell her.

"Darling——" he began.

"I know—but first of all an omelette, a casserole of chicken, a glass of Burgundy, a dish of stewed pears——"

"Térézia!"

"Adolf, I love you," she murmured.

He hailed a passing cab. "Jump in," he said. "What is the meaning of it all?" he asked.

She didn't directly answer his question, but instead she laid her tired head on his shoulder. "Hold me tight," she murmured. "Yes, one kiss—just one to make me feel alive. I have been so desperately frightened. I have had a dreadful adventure. . . ."

He smoothed her hair; he kissed her flower mouth; he called her every imaginable endearing term. Neither realized the musty fustiness of the jolting cab, or that the driver kept continually turning round in his seat and staring in, through the cracked window, at his amorous fare. Nothing mattered (to Térézia) but food and love. . . .

As to her lover, he was in the seventh heaven of romantic delight. What a windfall!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE days slipped past very quickly. Térézia was quite surprised when Monsieur de Fontenay solemnly presented her with a big bouquet of roses and his congratulations.

She was still in bed. The window curtains were thrown back and the bright June sunshine flooded her pretty room. The coloring was so delicate—gray, pink, white and discreet gilding. A choice crayon drawing by Watteau—in an oval frame—faced her. It represented a very pretty woman, yet not so pretty as Térézia . . . she knew it herself. From the open window she could see a handful of fresh green trees—and an acre or two of blue, blue sky.

“What is it?” she said.

“Your birthday, madame.”

He placed the roses on her counterpane—such a beauty—lace, ribbons, and needlework—and a discreet salute on her outstretched hand.

“Thank you,” she murmured.

So . . . she was eighteen—getting quite old!

Shock-headed Devin had been quite on his good behavior lately. He’d treated her with great deference—only about once a week did he call her any names worth mentioning. He took her protracted absences in Paris very good-naturedly. Her little peccadilloes he put down to youth. If at seventeen you can’t amuse yourself, when is to be done? He’d come to the just conclusion. He himself not being seventeen, but a distressingly old thirty (he looked forty), he kept prudently at home.

He said he had all the amusement he wanted looking

after the pigs. He'd lately invested in fine Yorkshire stock. Térézia very kindly refrained from being sarcastic. The whole world knew it wasn't pigs but fright which kept him boxed at Fontenay-des-Roses. He was afraid to meet his own bailiff, they said. He'd run any distance to escape Robespierre. He didn't want to incriminate himself with any party. He heroically refrained from airing his royalist sympathies. Such a great, well-born man would naturally uphold the interests of the crown. He didn't mind meeting the Bishop of Autun, Monseigneur de Talleyrand, a deputy—and enormously proud of the fact. (He'd done penance and talked piously to gain his seat. He wasn't a bit pious, really. Quite the contrary. The ladies loved him. Men didn't like him.) Well, Devin suffered the bishop. He was equally gracious to another of his wife's friends, de Ravoral. De Ravoral would frequently drop down on the couple (always ascertaining beforehand if she was at home) and bring them all the news of the day. He invariably left the master of the house shaken, and more inclined than ever to the proper breeding of pigs. "Nuff—nuff—nuff!" They at least were harmless animals, and a good investment. Little Devin had a true tradesman's eye on the profits. His chief complaint against Térézia was her extravagance. On the whole he took her lovers laconically. "If at seventeen you don't amuse yourself, when are you to do it?"

Yet he respected the *convenances*. Wasn't it punctiliously courteous of him to bring her an offering of flowers on the fifteenth of June? Truth to tell, he'd got hold of a wrong date—but that didn't matter. Térézia wanted a June birthday. Who wants to be born in the sere and yellow leaf? It is quite a bad omen. Devin was horribly superstitious. He was (so said his wife) horrible in many ways. However, the flowers were quite pretty.

"Thank you," she said again. "I'm getting up presently, and then you shall take me for a walk. We'll take the boy with us."

"I shall be charmed," he said.

So, you see, between storms they enjoyed moments of peaceful family life.

Peace wasn't the order of the day. In hot Paris—they'd had quite a heat wave—Deputy Robespierre and Rédacteur Tallien were disputing.

Tallien worked tremendously. There never was a more painstaking young man, and with it all he maintained a breezy optimism. On the darkest, wettest day he always saw a beneficent, radiant sun, getting up right, as it were, behind the inky clouds, for his sole benefit. Such a sight would naturally be conducive to good-humor.

It quite annoyed him to find his friend (they hated each other like poison), *citoyen* Robespierre, on such a glorious day in the dumps. There he would sit on his office stool like a monkey, black as a thunder-cloud, peevish, irritable, suspicious, in spite of his, Tallien's brilliant flow of talk.

Robespierre would lean his hot head on his left hand, elbow on table, and focus his adviser. From a rational point of view he was utterly wrong—yet, maybe, by a whim of chance superlatively right?

"I tell you," said Tallien, sprawling on his chair—in a new summer suit, pale violet, we fancy, with a pale-blue silk collar—"I tell you, we couldn't have arranged it better ourselves. For once in their lives the dear pets have behaved cleverly; 'mazing clever."

"We're not out of the wood."

Tallien nodded, fanning his heated face with his yellow gloves. "The very place on a summer's day."

The sound of gay young voices in the street below broke in upon his reflections. He looked out of the dim window—Robespierre's rooms were incredibly dirty. The sight of youth and innocence always gave him pleasure. From the window he glanced pityingly at the dyspeptic little man opposite him . . . poor devil, no woman would ever dream her heaven on his breast. . . .

"If I had the time," said Tallien, "I'd drive out to Fontenay-des-Roses."

"So," snarled the other, "you've patched up an acquaintance?"

"I don't approve of patches, sir; it's against my methods entirely." He stroked a fold of his brand-new summer coat. "Either all or nothing."

He leaped to his feet with disconcerting suddenness. "It'll be all—all—all!" he said.

"Keep your dirty——"

"Nonsense, man alive! D'you think I've the time to go love-making? I've never even tried—except once—to meet the lady. I can wait, I can always wait. I'm thinking of our birds, our pretty little human birds, fluttering in the woods—away. We'll catch 'em on the rebound . . . such good copy. In point of fact" (he tapped his breast-pocket), "I've got it all written up. A stirring article, *citoyen*, a very notable article, full of human disgust at human folly, and worse, human selfishness. Think of flying away, *trying* to fly away—from Duty! Isn't duty our conscience, our God, our constitution, with the gracious king at its head? he, ha, ha!"

Tallien's laugh was as sudden and loud as the boom of a fog-horn. It almost startled Robespierre.

"Have you got your facts?" he said.

"Facts and fancies, sir." He tapped the paper he held.

"I never believe in gossip."

"But you believe in yourself?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Rather more than you imagine."

Robespierre held out his clammy hand—it was an objectionable hand—none too clean. "Let me look at it."

"Presently, sir, presently," he said, vastly pleased with himself. "I may post into Varennes and drink a glass of wine at the *Golden Arms*. The landlord is rather a pal of mine, an excellent fellow and a good patriot. It would encourage him if I showed some interest in the crops—the coming harvest ought, by all reports, to be of prime quality."

Robespierre watched the younger man prance, as if

practising a dance measure, as he uttered these quaint absurdities. He looked full of life, this long-nosed individual; his big mouth was wreathed in smiles; his broad, strong teeth declaring agreeable things about his digestion. Again green-eyed envy oppressed the Public Accuser. It would have given him immortal pleasure to squash the exuberance of this robust young man.

"I confess you put it very aptly," said Robespierre, evidently referring to some earlier matter under discussion.

"The bait, the trap and the dear little mice," said Tallien, still capering. "Why, it is of exquisite simplicity, and between ourselves and the post, not without a touch of humor."

"How so?" (irritably).

"They little know that they are playing into our hands."

"Spies never yet collected in one camp."

"Yes, but, of course—they are all eyes, all ears—all tongues!"

"You take it, citizen, with unreasonable levity."

"Not at all." Tallien's long limbs grew rigidly stiff. "At heart I am desperate at the very idea of failure. Look you, we have all the pawns in the game. What are their effective allies? A handful of faithful guards—say a score or so of loyal gentlemen, any number of indiscreet women (women don't count), this very enterprising Swede—who may jeopardize his head; uncommon foolish methods, a talking and a buzzing to start a mole winking, much more a patriot of Robespierre's penetration—I tell you, their poor little battalion, all told, is of no more consequence than the dauphin's tin soldiers. I can throw them over with a sweep of my hand. I will throw them over—(we'll arrange that later). Good lord, man! can't you see that in their flight the king saves his country alive! All we want to win our game is a startling or a cowardly action on his part."

Rigid he stood as he spoke, facing the other's grudging approval.

Tallien passed his big hand over his sleek black hair. "Given so much—in justice they must take their share in the business—my faith! we will spare them the details of the return journey. We'll crowd our canvas with large colors, and give his majesty a national welcome. *That* part of the program belongs to us, and we'd be asses if we didn't profit by so notable an occasion. The streets of Paris shall be lined with an appreciative audience. We'll collect together the riff-raff, the goodly backbone of our new France. It'll be a sight for the gods to behold, and a milestone in the history of our country. No banners, no music, no military ceremonial, the people shall by their silence give solemn welcome to their—ruler. It will be a tremendous day, tremendous!" He leaped in the air and bawled in his excitement.

A knock at the door interrupted his eloquence. Robespierre composed his features—all agape at this fiery outburst—and Tallien, red-cheeked, seated himself at his desk. He dipped his quill in the large inkpot. "Come in," he said sharply.

The door opened cautiously to admit *ci-devant* Comte de Ravoral, looking exactly himself—bald pate, careful clothes, exquisite manner.

"I fear I am disturbing a conference," he said. "Let me plead guilty at once, with a thousand apologies for such indiscretion."

Tallien grunted. He did not like the *ci-devant* count. He had never liked him since he had had the honor of reading his villainous proofs.

Robespierre had only a casual acquaintance with this derelict of Louis XV.'s court. He remembered he had met him at the Fontenays'.

"Whatever the citizen's business may be," he said suavely, "we regret that to-day it is quite impossible to give the matter our attention. It is late——"

"Never too late to oblige a lady," interrupted Ravoral,

advancing on the tips of his polished boots towards Tallien. "Here is a surety of better things to come. A spring message to the Messenger of Hope." As he spoke he laid under Tallien's nose a dainty basket massed with dewy violets, and tied with white satin ribbons.

"I am greatly obliged," said Tallien, sniffing the offering. "My modesty forbids me to guess who has thus honored me."

Robespierre, behind his colleague's back, gurgled his disapproval. Tallien was fish enough to swallow any bait! What conceit!

And bland he looked, this tall son of the people smiling at the bluest blood of France. He had not enough polish to get up and offer the count a seat. He didn't appear to notice that his visitor, bending forward and fingering the violets, was standing.

Ravoral inhaled the perfume of the flowers over Tallien's long back and sloping shoulders (no, Tallien wasn't a well-built man), and, in the very discreetest of whispers he managed to convey to him that the modest gift concealed yet another offering of love.

"Thanks," said Tallien.

"No matter," said Ravoral, loudly, stepping back and waving his delicate fingers in a deprecating manner. "However, to please the most charming woman in Paris, just place her flowers in water. And then I'll fly. At what hour can I return?"

"Settle the man," signaled Robespierre.

"How can I serve you?" asked Tallien, rising.

"I am outside the matter, dear sir. The lady—by the way, her card is attached to the basket."

Tallien searched for the card, Ravoral in the meanwhile engaging Robespierre in conversation, and managing with his attenuated figure to screen the editor.

The card was quickly located, lying on the top of a small jewel-box, faded and old.—Tallien with great greed raised the lid and discovered a string of beautiful pearls.

". . . Two hundred and fifty thousand. I assure the

deputy these figures were given me as representing the crowd gathered on the Champ de Mars. A wonderful and inspiring sight. Two hundred and fifty thousand!" The old man emphasized his point.

Tallien, secretly laughing at Ravoral's adroitness, slipped the handsome bribe into his pocket. It was a valuable necklace.

"Here is the card," he said pleasantly. He looked at it. "H'm! how can I serve the *ci-devant* Marquise de Longueville?"

"She has been ordered by her doctor to take the waters at Bath."

"Quite a fashionable resort."

"It seems there is a difficulty in getting passports. I took upon myself the liberty of troubling the citizen on the matter. The lady is in delicate health."

"We might oblige the lady," said Tallien good-naturedly. "You are quite right, we have been obliged to limit our passports—troublesome times in France—and also to enforce very strict regulations. However, there is an exception to every rule." (He signaled to Robespierre a reassuring message.)

Robespierre coughed. "I am very willing to grant the lady permission to stay—at Bath."

"Exactly. A charming health resort in the south of England. Do you know England?"

"Only by hearsay."

"A delightful country, though the inns baffle description."

Tallien rustled a large sheet of parchment, and sat down at his writing-table, dipped his quill in the ink-horn and wrote with his usual rapidity. "That is all right," he said, turning round and looking at Robespierre. "All I want is your signature, if you would kindly give yourself the trouble. Here beneath mine."

Robespierre took hold of a pen. Tallien laughed good-naturedly. "No, my friend," he said, "red ink, if you please; it is so much more effectual."

Robespierre smiled and wrote his sprawling signature beneath Tallien's (equally sprawling).

Tallien blotted the document.

De Ravoral thanked them profusely.

Tallien rolled the document and tied it with a piece of green silk, attached to two splashing seals.

"At your service, citizen," he said, handing the roll to Ravoral.

Ravoral again expressed his deep sense of gratitude. He went towards the door. "Dear little violets," he said, *en passant*. "Emblem of good fortune. Good-evening, gentlemen."

Old Ravoral ran almost jauntily down the steep stairs and into his waiting cab.

"Home," he said.

And up his own stairs this gay old bird leaped like a schoolboy. He used his latchkey with precaution. Once in the privacy of his library he added to his precaution by turning the key in the door. Then he unrolled the precious passport—the face value five francs seventy-five centimes, plus two hundred and fifty thousand francs, plus a basket of delicious-violets.

He read it over carefully; he read it again—a true and honorable document giving to the *citoyenne* Longueville and her family, seven persons all told, a free pass from the territories of France.

Ravoral, as it was getting dark, lit all his available candles and one snuffing old oil lamp. He also drew down his blinds.

With infinite pains he wrote a facsimile of the two signatures very boldly inscribed in red ink. Like a good boy he repeated his copy until perfect.

Then, like a neat boy, he very carefully erased the sprawling redness of Robespierre's and Tallien's bracketed names. And (with some natural trepidation) he dipped the formidable signatures (as it were) into the dye-pot.

Presently with satisfaction he glanced at Madame de Longueville's passport. "That is their little game," he said, "is it? Well, my dear lady, I have done the best for you, humanly speaking, that I can. The rest we must leave to Providence."

On this old Ravoral tidied his bureau, blew out his lights, rolled up his paper, readjusted the green ribbon, unlocked his door, slipped into his great-coat, and landed at Madame de Longueville's house just in time for supper.

He was received with acclamation and some tears.

Never once did the bald-headed nobleman allude to ink, red or black.

CHAPTER XIX

NEVER had leafy June been more exquisite than in this year of grace 1791. It was quite a pleasure to quit the hot precincts of Paris—the sun-baked pavements, the scorching squares, the little breathless side streets smelling not of aloes and myrrh; a rather villainous odor, particularly at nightfall, pervaded these mean streets where the poor housed as best they could.

The spirit of the hour didn't allow of lightly linked friendships, swiftly made and quickly broken. The dancing-halls in Paris stood practically empty; even the Bois had less attraction for the public that was customary at this time of year—thirsty, tired citizens evidently quenched their thirst elsewhere. Clubs had sprung up everywhere, and were immensely popular; in every grade of society men frequented more or less dubious assemblies, where liberty was upheld as the very bed-rock of unrestricted citizenship; amazing how bravery of sorts flourished in the outposts of Paris.

How well we can understand the call of the country, of the leafy, distant glades, where, to all purposes, perpetual tranquillity reigns, perpetual twilight, cool as a zephyr breeze and of touching purity. No law-abiding citizen fails to appreciate a woodland scene; it speaks to him of the peace which once upon a time dwelt on earth—probably, if he thinks the matter over, when Eve yet slept in Adam's rib.

Even her majesty the Queen of France dreamed, when the June sunshine flooded the royal apartments, of a happy day in the country.

By the arbitrary law of the people, which carried more weight than St. Louis' golden scroll, she and the king had been mewed up in the Tuileries for over a year. So zeal-

ous were the citizens of Paris to guard the royal family that they'd refused to listen to reason, or to the laws of health. It was perilously wearisome at the palace. Nothing of interest occurred to break the monotony of the daily routine: a little gossip, a few card-parties; a paucity of scandal and much talk which soared entirely above their imagination. Having nothing better to do, it seemed the courtiers exaggerated public affairs. All kinds of impossible, wicked stories were, under the plea of secrecy, retailed to their majesties. Sister Elizabeth was, of course, privy to each confidence.

Ever since Easter the queen had forbidden gossip in her presence. The people and the antics of the people did not interest her. On the whole the people had behaved improperly.

What with the breath of radiant summer, the wild call of the woods, the glitter of marshland, melting into the azure sea—all seen in the perspective of a wistful mind—the glamor of the country took more and more hold of the royal family.

There were secret councils, secret smugglings, secret orders, secret amusement—(Was there ever such an adventure embarked upon by the Crown?) The king woke up to the task in hand, nodded benign consent, laughed loudly over certain articles of dress and took much pleasure (behind locked doors) in trying on a very new set of clothes. How he dangled the round hat, which completed a delightful costume, with boyish delight! “Eh bien, me voilà,” he said, popping it on his royal wig. Madame Elizabeth, far more sensible than the king, was for ever cautioning silence—his majesty's spirits were like to run away with his prudence. It was on the whole a matter of relief to the good lady when “the dear man” was safe seated at his writing table, glum as an unbroken thundercloud, pondering his correspondence. Long before June broke into leaf his majesty had solemnly promised himself to write a concise and explicatory Letter. The Letter was to be left behind him when the party went a-frolicking.

Such an affair! (whisper it not) in the dead of night, in unrecognizable attire, with baggage and kind friends, waiting-maids, band-boxes, gentlemen whips, brand-new conveyance, borrowed names and all the wit they could muster!

When Marie Antoinette thought of this prodigious escapade, now in the making, when she tried on strange garments, practiced stranger manners, tried not to look herself and caught sight of her dignified yet strangely ageing face in the looking-glass, the enterprise would seem to have a sinister importance. There was no joke behind the grim reality of it all. Blessed children of France! (she would turn and kiss them) they were mercifully spared the revelation of the looking-glass, and even to the anointed king, their father, some good angel had denied the gift of penetration.

We can take it for granted that Marie-Antoinette suffered the most from the restricted air of Paris, and that the king was more deeply annoyed by the poor comfort of his palace. Small matters were great matters to his majesty—and great matters hung as trifles before his kindly eyes.

What followed is history. We all know how the royal flight turned out a dismal failure; how every detail wanted oiling, above all clipping! How maddening it must have been to the Faithful Few to watch this piling of effects; this grandiose preparation for a flight, which was no flight but a solemn procession into the ridiculous.

It is history, and sad history at that, artifice upon artifice. The snarers waiting for the overweighted birds, and the poor birds fluttering back into the cage—almost as eager to be caught as to gain their freedom. The travesty of the return; the church bells pealing; the marshaling of crowds; the grant of public holiday; the shuttered shops of Paris. And far and wide to the uttermost corners of France, the panting couriers riding for dear life, carrying the fatal tidings of a king's broken faith.

Yes, as Tallien had pleasantly anticipated, the second

act of the performance was infinitely better stage-managed than the first. It required hard work, but a true patriot does not spare himself. Tallien had worked very hard indeed, and by some impious decree of luck he'd touched rock in a quagmire of uncertainty.

There had been a night and a day when, sweating agony beneath an indifferent manner, he had faced the odds of an enraged populace. It requires so infinitely little to shift the uneasy scales of popularity. A misplaced gesture and he, Tallien, felt convinced that all his eloquence would not have saved his neck. So (sweating agony) he held himself rigid. He was as utterly neutral as an unborn babe. In this attitude he awaited events.

And triumph held his great lips in an enormous smile. The day of the King's Public Disgrace, Tallien ran around Paris—as if suspended on invisible wires—all animation—all-powerful—greatly admired, he of the vast energy and patriotic fervor.

He marshaled the willing crowds; he joked with the little women, always his slaves, the work-girls of Paris; he gave fatherly counsel to white-bearded men, this strapping, ambitious fellow not yet thirty.

How joyfully he breathed the impure air of the streets; how often he glanced towards the open road—how he was the very first to spy a big fly crawling in a cloud of dust, presently to emerge into a lumbering conveyance of sorts (with a full retinue behind), and at last, in front of his frank impatience, to take concrete form in the shape of a traveling-carriage, of dignified dimensions, harnessed to creditably fresh horses, and led by shame-faced postilions, containing for him, Tallien, the salt of the earth.

His loyalty was exuberant at that moment. He almost doffed his hat to the heated visage of corpse-faced monarchy.

No muffled beat of drum or sound of solemn tocsin was necessary to convince Tallien that the king had staked his all—and lost his all.

He slipped from his place in the stolid, patient, awe-

struck crowd—he rushed down a comparatively empty side-street to a new coign of vantage. He was granted a brief glimpse of the queen's face. Her face told him nothing; her eyes were downcast. Slowly, very slowly, the mournful procession passed along the shuttered streets of Paris. . . . “Eh bien, me voilà,” said the king, reiterating his stock phrase—as he put his head out of the window.

Next morning, again, the little breakfast party in the royal dining-room—the same old battered coffee-pot on the table which had caused the king's annoyance the day before yesterday.

The sealed Letter had been removed from its place; by now its contents were familiar to a million minds. Day and night, printing-presses had churned out copies of that incriminatingly foolish Letter, “written by Our Hand” and we may add composed by “Our Mind.” Oh, why, Marie-Antoinette, in the hurry of flight, why hadn't you paused an instant to snatch that damning Letter and commit it to the sacred flames? You might have known your man. . . .

In one of the dining-room windows at the Tuileries, the dauphin had hung his bird-cage. Presently, the king, after eating a good breakfast, left the ladies to their silence, and presented the canaries with a lump of sugar. He stood a long time watching their cheerful antics, tapping the little cage with his royal fingers. . . .

CHAPTER XX

MARQUIS DE FONTENAY was deeply incensed at the king's ignoble mistake. His majesty—it seems—had publicly declared that the royal picnic (or whatever he called it) had been from start to finish a mere frolic. They'd dressed themselves up for fun, merely to amuse themselves and the dauphin and Madame Royale—she a pensive little girl who evidently wanted plenty of amusement before she laughed . . . had she laughed?

Really and truly the Marquis Devin had no patience with the whole story. He glared angrily and uncomprehendingly at Mlle. de Cardilac, who, a fortnight after the said escapade, was paying a visit to Fontenay—and who had no better breeding than to sit weeping—at his breakfast table, over “the sad affair.”

“It serves them right,” said Devin.

Térézia finished her plateful of strawberries and cream before speaking. “It was a tragedy,” she said, calmly.

Devin didn't answer. He never answered his wife, if he could help it. He got up instead and sauntered away to his pigs. “Nuff—nuff,” they grunted.

He stood over a great sow, wallowing in the mire, and tickled her ears with his walking-stick . . . how he pitied the king, and how he would have envied him if he'd been successful. No man envies signal misfortune. His position was intolerable. He was practically a prisoner in his palace, under the watch and care of a justly incensed nation. “Nuff—nuff,” said the sow, rolling on her back in an ecstasy of delight.

Yet the King's Flight—very feelingly alluded to in *L'Ami des Citoyens*—hadn't been without its notable results. Something had to be done. Out of much misery

there sprang a glory. The papers called it a glory, and much else, all of a deliriously joyful character. Térézia—when she heard that the long-projected idea had actually taken substantial form—was delighted.

“How nice,” she said. “Then they can’t fight any more. They’ve got what they’ve wanted—beasts—and I’ll be able to look forward to a pleasant season. Last winter there were no balls to speak of.”

De Ravoral stroked his chin thoughtfully. He felt for the lovely creature at his feet. It was a lovely September morning; the gardens of Fontenay were looking their best—so was the marchioness, in a belated summer hat wreathed with field flowers, and a transparent barège dress, patterned with blue, sucking a straw and looking up at him, full of delightful wonder.

It’s nice to be an oracle at any age, but especially so late in life. Comte de Ravoral would be the last man not to appreciate the blessings left to him—he could easily number them. He leaned back in his comfortable garden chair, mildly grateful to his valet that he’d made him wear his thick boots. At eighteen you can, probably, without any evil consequences, lie full length on the September turf—in spite of a transparent dress and damp grass, but at—well, at middle age, it’s best to be prudent.

De Ravoral had never been so prudent in all his life, though he was habitually prudent—living on his traditions, and the intimacy of celebrities. If he’d had St. Simon’s ability, so he said, he would have had great pleasure in writing his memoirs. The times were felicitous. St. Simon’s records were prosy, compared to what his might have been. At the present moment all was excitement and unbounded joy. Personally, he preferred joy in a more guarded form. Let loose, it can so easily degenerate into vulgarity. Vulgarity was the sin of the day, he said. That’s why their majesties, for fear of contamination, prudently shut themselves up in their palace. The queen very seldom went abroad.

Probably, later, she’d be obliged to attend some public

functions, the opera and so on. The queen's duty was to set a good example to the other women—ladies who, in exactly the same predicament as her majesty, were obliged to keep in Paris against their wills. A most odious state of affairs, from a lady's point of view. Positively, yes, positively, no fresh passports were issued. The Cardilacs—like herself—had been too late. Never mind, if it promised to be a good season, did it matter? Surely Paris had the right to enjoy her own beauties? "You belong to us, madame," he said, "if not by birth, by marriage. I felicitate Paris."

"Don't be absurd," she said. "I want to hear more of the situation."

"So you shall, dear child."

"It is all so thrilling, if it's true."

Térézia took hold of the old gentleman's hand and held it against her warm cheek. "I won't release you, until I'm satisfied," she said. "Go on."

He smiled, and, to the best of his ability, he explained (as he said) the inexplicable business.

All France was washed as with spring dew, all France was laughing, shouting gaily, trembling with happy emotion. The people had gained their stubbornly-fought battle. No longer need they pull unevenly under the heavy yoke of aristocracy and monarchy. Look you, the king had given his country a free Constitution. The old Assembly, working under restrictions, had melted into thin air, vanished as a spent cloud and, in its place, in hot, perspiring, giddily joyful Paris a new and august Parliament labored for the good of the State.

Térézia was very much impressed. De Ravoral with his own bloodshot eyes (bright as facets) had seen this inspiring body take the oath of allegiance and rustle documents white as virgin snow. "All was yet to be written."

So said the bald-headed nobleman, following his fair hostess's example and nibbling at a dry grass-stem.

"It is wonderful," he said, "as long as it lasts."

"To break a Constitution is the deed of a maniac," said

Térézia; "the heinous and melancholy crime of a weak, desperate individual."

Old Ravoral nodded his bald pate.

"Your dress is charming," he said. "Whom are you quoting?"

Térézia colored. As it happened, she had heard Desmoulins express himself in some such words, in his exquisitely graceful manner. His hot words could never scorch from the very coolness of their utterance; they sometimes fanned the flames. A pity his genius was allowed to languish.

"I judge in these matters by my own conviction," she said loftily.

"A very pretty dress," repeated Ravoral, taking the straw from his mouth and throwing it away. "As you say, adaptability is a science."

She had never said anything of the kind. However, it sounded vaguely clever, so she agreed to it.

"How well you remember my words."

"My dear lady, I keep my notes."

Ravoral, like a spoiled child, grew tractable. He took the privilege of his class and age, leaned back in his comfortable garden chair and closed his eyes. No,—thought Térézia, watching him—he didn't look handsome, and yes—he did look ill.

Everyone, it seemed, looked haggard and ill in spite of the glorious Constitution.

"Don't go to sleep," began Térézia. "Have you heard from the Longuevilles?"

Ravoral kept his eyes closed. "It is ravishing, this warmth and the music of your voice," he murmured. "Allow me the luxury of blindness. Yes, I have heard of their safe arrival in England. Bath seems to be a fashionable and expensive resort. The Longuevilles remain in Bloomsbury."

"Where is that?"

"London."

"Why call it Bloomsbury?"

"A thousand pardons——"

"They were extremely lucky. Do you know I had friends crossing to England by the same packet?"

"Yes?"

"At an enormous sacrifice they had bought their passports——"

Ravoral nodded.

"Can you believe it? they, and for the matter of that all their fellow-travelers, were refused embarkation. They cried, they swore, they showed their passports——"

Ravoral nodded.

"All to no purpose. The officers in charge said that they regretted the position extremely but, technically, their passports failed in a qualifying point. Something had been forgotten, they must return to Paris. Neither bribes nor sighs made the brutes relent. They are a pack of wolves at Havre!"

Térédia raised her arms to heaven with a very graceful gesture—her wide sleeves fell apart, disclosing the dimpled roundness of her perfect arms—all lost on Ravoral. He still persisted in keeping his eyes shut.

"Strange," he murmured.

"Why the Longuevilles? They were, so it seems, treated to distinguished consideration; allowed to go on board at once. No one touched their luggage—they might have been royalty——"

"Surely not," murmured Ravoral.

Térédia laughed. "You mean that royalty have no privileges nowadays? I am curious to know why those rather uninteresting people should have been favored. Especially——"

"Yes?"

"Desmoulins told me himself no one had been more surprised than—who? Guess. Do open your eyes."

Ravoral opened them suddenly, very wide.

"How could I possibly guess?"

"Robespierre himself!"

"I congratulate my old friends," said Ravoral, pleas-

antly, "and, between ourselves, I think they had a lucky escape. From what I hear, Bloomsbury is not the most attractive spot on earth—but I hope they'll stay there, and that their boarding-house will keep them."

"Boarding-house! The Longuevilles!"

"Madame," he said, "without money Bloomsbury is a very dismal hole, of no attraction whatsoever."

"The poor things! And Madame de Longueville who'd never wear anything but the finest batiste and real lace next her skin! Her personal linen was a dream."

"May the dream help her to exist," said Ravoral very piously. "My ship is all of mist; my ship is all of dreams; and clouds and vapors and tears and sighs——"

"That's pretty," said Térézia. "Whom are you quoting?"

"Myself."

"Since when has monsieur turned a poet?"

"Since the day when I first met the incomparable Térézia, if you must ferret out my secret."

Térézia smiled, well pleased. "Even you," she said gently.

"Even I," said old Ravoral. "You are nineteen, you tell me?"

"Only eighteen."

"If you live, imagine the record!"

"Thank you."

She rose and slipped her arm affectionately into his.

"Come," she said. "I know it is time for lunch."

"Lunch!" he repeated mournfully. "Lunch! You are shockingly prosaic. Here have I made you the most solemn declaration of a full life, and you answer me by referring to smoked salmon and poached eggs; lamb cutlets and late peas, followed by a choice of quails in aspic, or cold ham——"

"How did you guess?"

"I never guess. I always make inquiries."

"You wicked creature! Spying in the kitchen, making love to the cook——"

"Two francs did it, and a smile."

Térézia looked critically at Ravoral's profile. "Give me a smile," she asked.

"After that perfect lunch, darling, I'll be happy to grimace as a monkey if it pleases you."

"I am a good housekeeper, am I not?"

"In a sense, a very good sense."

"What do you mean?"

"Madame, surely I've explained enough for one day? Some things are better taken for granted."

CHAPTER XXI

NOT before the following December had Térézia an occasion for satisfying her curiosity, and seeing for herself how the queen took her "misfortune."

Everyone agreed that she was unfortunate. Some even reiterated the old Diamond Necklace scandal—in fact Tallien had frequently brought it into his copy—it was always useful, with new embellishments, to fan the unreluctant fire . . . everyone could see the fire was burning well. "I don't want a fire," said Tallien cheerily—he was very hopeful in those days—"I want a blaze! A top-hole blaze!" (Only, of course he used his own slang.) In Rédacteur—excuse us, in Deputy Tallien's mind (he'd got his seat—Robespierre congratulated him warmly and smiled sicklily) it was already a creditable beginning. Encaged royalty at one end—and trumpeting patriotism at the other—could you ask for better? Eh? "I can," said Robespierre. Tallien took his meaning at once. He shook him warmly by the hand, absorbing, as it were, its moisture into his own broad palm. "So do I," he said, or rather whispered—a long-drawn whisper, accompanied by a searching glance. . . . Robespierre dropped his eyes. It was about this time that his oculist ordered the honorable deputy a pair of glasses—slightly smoked—for wearing out o' doors—"to save his valuable eyesight." So he said. Tallien knew better. "Bah, they don't take me in!" he said to sensitive Desmoulins; "he's really afraid to meet the glance of honest men." It was on the tip of Desmoulin's tongue to say, "That explains your intimacy." However, he refrained. To be witty at another man's expense is often uncommonly dear for yourself. The times were

ruinous. Bread was going up, and every kind of food; money was going down—alarmingly. Suave M. Necker and madame his wife and madame his daughter had recently left for Switzerland, on a “holiday,” so they said. “When was he coming back?” No one knew. “Probably when affairs were regulated,” hazarded a wiseacre. “Puiff!” whistled a pessimist, “that means never.” Tallien was of a different opinion. “Citizens,” he said calmly, “I see light.” And he looked up—as if the light he saw was entirely heavenly. We rather fancy a little low-mannered devil, blowing his bellows below, squealed ironically. Little devils—we are sure—are much amused when humans behave illogically. Tallien really was rather a “delightful” fellow. His breezy good-nature was colossal!

In December Térézia secured a box at a gala representation of Beaumarchais’ *Mariage de Figaro*. She insisted on Claire joining her party. She wasn’t staying with her friends—in spite of new curtains having been put up in the drawing-room, and new plants, and probably a new work-basket—or at least a fresh outfit of haberdashery. The Cardilacs had made up their mind to stay all the winter in Paris. Lots of their friends were doing the same. What was the good of journeying to the frontier, only to be turned back again? Some escaped through the very teeth of vigilance. Robespierre swore. Tallien swore (cheerfully). “There are still a good many left,” said the latter gentleman, with one of his broadest smiles. “Later, sir (again he employed a whisper), “we’ll further restrict their movements.”

Already these two amiable protectors of the poor—Friends of Man—or whatever they styled themselves—had hit upon a satisfactory plan to enforce justice. “We must wait,” said Tallien, piously. “The spring will bring her own counsel, and the summer will ripen it. With any luck, my dear friend, we’ll be able to gather much autumn fruit. In the meanwhile, let’s prepare the soil. It’s very congenial, *very* rich, but all the same it won’t be the worse for a little turning over. I have brought you an article,

my best of friends. . . .” At times Tallien was quite fulsome in his address.

Citoyen Robespierre couldn’t bear him. He had to put up with a good many things in those days that he didn’t like. Of all trials is there anything more unbearable than waiting, and fearing that your precious schemes won’t come off at the last? . . . There were too many fools, talking in the Constitution, and outside it . . . pouff!—the place wanted thinning. By G—— it wanted thinning! Such a jabber and such a crowd! On his oath Robespierre didn’t know who he distrusted most, his smug, dignified majesty or a little retail grocer round the corner, who was full of sedition and craft. If he could, that foolish grocer, he’d upset Deputy Robespierre’s administration. . . .

“Claire, darling, you’ve just got to come,” said Térézia. “I’m bringing three delightful men.”

“I haven’t the heart, dear.”

Térézia pinched the girl’s pale cheeks. “I’ll buy you a stick of rouge. It’s *so* plebeian to show your feelings. I know you are wretched on account of the cousin. I tell you he is safe.”

Claire shook her head. “It’s not that, dear.”

“When did you hear last from him?”

“Six months ago.”

“Six months isn’t a lifetime! Germany is a huge place. Cheer up. You never see me depressed! And I’ve every reason to be. Devin has slaughtered all his pigs—I don’t know why—he said they were suspicious, and anyhow he’s horribly cross. Sits all day and looks at the clock—as if that would hurry time! When you are in a hurry, *never* look at the clock. You don’t suppose I want to be killed? I don’t believe in it. Devin does. I wish he’d die naturally and properly. He’d spare himself so much trouble——”

Of course Claire had to give in—and she did it with a good grace, too. She kissed her dear Térézia—who talked such a lot of nonsense—and said she’d be very pleased to come to the play.

The centre of interest in all that crowded house was the royal box. Her majesty's appearance aroused discreet whispers. How tired she looked—how sad she looked; yes, and in spite of royal magnificence (look at her diamonds!) her age was more than apparent, nay, grossly exaggerated—poor queen! The loss of her beauty struck Térézia as the most flagrant robbery in all that maelstrom of greedy grasping. They had taken her liberty, and one foot as it were off her throne—they might have spared her her beautiful eyes, her beautiful complexion, her happy, roguish smile—the smile of a dairymaid frothing her milk-pails.

Only a few years ago Marie-Antoinette had stood at the zenith of her imperial charm. Térézia remembered the first glimpse she had had of her, and how she'd been overwhelmed with a desire to kiss her hand. Térézia was always one for kisses. (Kisses signified to her so much and so little.) Now, in spite of her new pink velvet dress—the first time on—she felt an inclination to weep. She would have liked to have offered her majesty her lace shawl and beg her to wrap herself discreetly in it. It was terrible for the queen to have to sit there, the cynosure of all eyes (some very evil), to have to suffer either glances of compassion or a brutal stare of triumph.

Why did they invent such cruel gossip about her? Such spiteful, hateful gossip—a shadow of truth in a big cauldron of lies. Not one of her enemies believed any good of her.

The representative gathering at the Odéon was unusually democratic. Térézia glanced round the house, curling her lips. Look at the rank and file! Who paid for these people's tickets? Socialism rubbing elbows with *ci-devant* conservatism. It was not fashionable to incline towards the throne. . . . The right to live belonged to every man. To live? Térézia remembered her adventure last year and how the fat man had boasted of coming events, and exploited the new doctrine. What was it? Death to the aristocrats! There had been no perceptible

change in popular feeling. The Constitution had signally failed to relieve the situation. Above the music Térézia seemed to hear a menacing cry . . . death! death! . . .

The queen, seated well to the front of her box, remained an impassive spectator of the scene. She very seldom glanced at the stage; she very seldom spoke. One might have said that her majesty's thoughts had strayed, strayed beyond the heavy, impure atmosphere of the theatre. Maybe she saw, as in a mirror clearly, her own people's regretful farewell to their princess setting out for France? She had been young in those days, young and thoughtless; fifteen years old, and sufficiently spoiled to get her own way in everything. Love had made it easy. Hate was a different matter. . . .

Her majesty, looking down, met the fixed glance of a personal enemy. She knew him for what he was, this little hard-working lawyer man with a smooth tongue and a mind of such infinite pettiness. She knew him and she didn't fear him, or his methods or his policy or what he—in his miserable person—stood for . . . her majesty had always been brought up to despise the *canaille*.

She met his eyes without flinching. She drew herself up proudly. Robespierre, utterly unabashed, kept his flattened head well thrown back, staring up at the royal box. He was also thinking of other matters than the play. There were clashings in his little head, and smiting hammers, heavy dull blows and sharp sword-thrusts . . . and sweetest of all, dull cries of agony and shrill cries for mercy. . . .

He scratched the back of his neck. . . .

The king was the only complaisant individual at the theatre. He had long since forgotten "regrettable incidents." He had long since, by the signing of this new Constitution, convinced himself of the stability of the Crown. He had atoned for those "regrettable incidents" by a very high and mighty condescension. His reign would mark a unique place in French history. He wished his people well. He had comported himself with true dig-

nity. No one had forced his hand. He had of himself arrived at the best solution of a political deadlock. Air! Air! He had thrown wide the door and ushered in the morning. God knows that he wished his people well. . . .

He smiled and fidgeted, and, on the edge of the box, beat his royal fingers in time to the gay light music. He was in quite a good temper. He met the eyes of one of his chief councilors—a man rather given to new ideas, but not a bad fellow at heart; with kingly condescension and fatherly good-will he smiled at “the creature.” (Marie-Antoinette, estimable lady though she was, had a way of expressing her dislike in unmeasured terms—she had called Deputy Robespierre “a creature”—and worse. . . .)

The creature, observing royal condescension, received it with a glassy stare.

The king was quite taken aback. He sighed, then he yawned. He signaled to his gentleman-in-waiting.

“What is the time?” he asked.

“Just upon midnight, sire.”

“Bien, bien.”

In half-an-hour’s time he would be able to slip into a loose jacket and eat his supper in peace. He wasn’t so young as he had been. The king glanced very affectionately at the queen. He looked distressed. Faintly he realized Marie-Antoinette’s first gray hairs. It was very disturbing. He almost frowned at Robespierre. What right had he to anger the queen! He would have liked to have risen to his feet, and shaken his fist in the horror-struck face of patriotism, shouting “Cochons, cochons!” They were all a set of pigs, despicable, low-down, underbred pigs! He grew very red in the face. The queen noticed his majesty’s discomfiture. She put out her hand.

“Thank you, my friend,” said the king, and he held tightly on to the all too fragile fingers. Her rings bit into Marie-Antoinette’s flesh. But she did not remove her imprisoned hand. So they sat, the cynosure of all eyes.

During the *entr’acte* Claire looked round the house and asked questions.

"Who's that lady in the opposite box? She is very pretty."

Térézia leveled her glasses at the box. "Which one, dear? The woman in green with that awful feather in her head?"

"No, the lady in white."

"That's Madame Josephine de Beauharnais. She's rather nice-looking. I know her slightly. Had dinner with her last week. That's her husband to the left, and her lover to the right—at least I think so. He's one of the men of the hour."

"M. de Beauharnais?"

"No, of course not. The greatest bore on earth. Soldiers generally are." Térézia looked up at the officer standing behind her. "You are not listening, are you?"

"With the greatest attention, *citoyenne*."

"There are exceptions to every rule," she admitted.

The man sat down and drew his chair very close to the beautiful *citoyenne*. Over her bare back he whispered intelligently into her shell-like ear. . . . Térézia smiled. "Don't be wicked," she said.

"Be reasonable," he said.

"I'm always reasonable," she sighed.

Little Mlle. Claire discreetly continued observing the house. It amused her. She didn't often come to the play. She looked again at the pretty Vicomtesse de Beauharnais . . . she had a fascinating smile. (As we know, little Claire was very generous towards women—she even respected their weaknesses.) . . . She wondered why she didn't like her good-looking husband. She didn't like the appearance of the other man. She knew him by sight—M. Paul Barras, a gentleman of poor reputation, in spite of being one of the men of the hour. Claire actually tossed her head. *That* wasn't much of a recommendation. He was a gentleman, after all . . . an aristocrat. She shivered; the title had an ominous sound. What had they all done to have brought themselves to this sorry pass? Claire's eyes filled with tears, as, for one brief instant, she

met the queen's eyes. The queen looked at the young girl, across the crowded house, and smiled . . . such a terribly sad smile. Claire blushed and hastily looked away. It was, she considered, excessively bad manners to stare at royalty.

Her glance wandered to the cheaper part of the house, the pit, as we'd call it to-day—filled by a surging, laughing, gesticulating crowd. A faint film passed over her eyes. She bent forward, staring eagerly.

"Térédia," she called, turning round.

"Darling?"

Térédia's voice was as milk, rich and creamy. Lieutenant Brienne, talking with the third man—who wondered why the deuce he'd been asked—recognized its quality. The dear lady was enjoying herself. Captain X—— was a notable lady-killer. Brienne laughed good-humoredly. He was also an officer, up on leave from Valences.

"Isn't that Georges, Georges Boisgaloup, sitting there?"

Claire pointed eagerly towards the pit. "I must attract his attention," she said.

"Do nothing of the kind," said Térédia sharply. (Her voice was no longer rich and creamy . . . Brienne stroked his moustache . . . 'pon his soul, he couldn't understand women.) "I don't want to meet him. He's a brute, an unmitigated brute!"

"Never mind, darling," murmured the contrite Claire. In the joy of seeing a friend from "old days"—how distant they seemed—she'd utterly forgotten that darling Térédia hated Georges. He'd been rude to her, very rude—so unlike Georges.

Claire stifled her disappointment. M. Brienne came delicately to her rescue. He distracted mademoiselle with an agreeable flow of small talk . . . it was a devilish long pause. Had something happened behind the scenes? (As a matter of fact the stage manager had had his orders from "a man of the hour." No able patriot ought to ignore any little opportunity to annoy majesty . . . they didn't like being kept waiting—it was not etiquette. The

stage manager—a dense patriot—had seen the point at last. “The *citoyen*,” he said, with a grin, “could rest assured the leading lady would lose her shoe—at the right moment.” “Exactly; no hurry about her finding it. . . .”) Bah! what contemptible pigs they were! His majesty was quite right.

M. Brienne pointed out to Claire a brother officer, also up on leave.

Claire brightened and said she’d heard his name before from her friend, M. de Boisgaloup.

“They’re inseparables, mademoiselle.”

“He looks foreign.”

“A Corsican. His mother is a widow with a large family, mainly existing on Bonaparte’s exertions. People consider him good-looking.”

“He’s got fine eyes, monsieur,” said Claire modestly. “Only he looks too restless to please me.”

“He’s wedged in a crowd and he wants to get on.”

In truth Lieutenant Bonaparte had a very poor place. His thin, sallow face had a contemptuous expression. He was eating an orange, rather hungrily, and obviously not attending to what his companion, Boisgaloup, was saying.

“The amount of work Lieutenant Bonaparte gets through is positively astonishing. I tell you, mademoiselle, he’ll make nothing of walking ten miles, without breakfast, to attend a lecture in the morning and sit up all night, supperless, perfecting his lesson.”

“No wonder he looks thin,” laughed Claire. “What’s his ambition, sir?”

At that moment the lights were lowered and the curtain went up, so Brienne hadn’t an opportunity of answering mademoiselle’s question. It was the last act.

Afterwards, in the crowded vestibule, Térézia clutched Claire’s arm fiercely. “There he is,” she said. “He’s been here all evening and I’ve never known it. I am the most unlucky woman on earth.”

Passing through the swing-doors Claire recognized the

tall, loosely-built figure of Deputy Tallien. "What a mercy," she said. "I can't bear the sight of him."

"Oh, you little fool!" said Térézia, shaking her friend's arm before letting it go. "We are going on to supper at Lamertine's. Yes, you've got to come. My darling child, I must think of my reputation. Remember, Devin has sold his pigs and he's awfully cross."

As a matter of fact, earlier in the evening, Deputy Tallien had seen and recognized the beautiful *ci-devant* Marquise de Fontenay. He'd colored up all over his big face with pleasure. He made up his mind that he wouldn't allow fate to dally any longer with his desire; it was keen and very alive.

He had sauntered carelessly down the gangway—he was sitting in the stalls—towards the first-tier boxes . . . no doubt she'd be delighted to see him . . . no doubt——

In the midst of these agreeable reflections, Deputy Robespierre's unpleasant voice recalled him to—well, shall we call it life? He'd been crossing a pleasant field full of delightful fancy—here he was, bang up against actuality and Robespierre's greenest expression. Tallien sighed.

"Where are you going to?"

"Nowhere," said Tallien, sitting down beside his friend.

"That's to say, I can wait—I can always wait."

CHAPTER XXII

BEFORE March, a new fear struck the infantine nation. Europe was on her heels! War was imminent! The emigrants had mustered an army of close on half a million. The Germans would be over the frontier in no time! Whose the fault? The king's! Who had intrigued for this disgraceful result? The queen! Who triumphed, fancying a speedy solution to small matters of personal trial? The aristocrats!

And in all this seething turmoil—where every man suspected his brother and ribbon cockades gave place to rude twists of tricolor worsted—Robespierre asks for leave “to arrange his private affairs, and also to take much-needed rest,” betakes himself to Arras and installs himself on a tranquil farm to drink milk, eat home-made cheeses, and contemplatively to stroke the house-cat's fur. The farmer's wife would say (half jestingly) that often in the semi-darkness of evening she could see how sparks flew from the cat's back. The cat kept her eyes shut, but the contemplative gentleman kept his wide open—staring into the embers. He did not like a blaze. He did not like being disturbed. For hours he would sit there by the fireside, stroking the cat's fur. At times he hardly looked human—this strange, ugly man. He gave no trouble, he was gentle in his ways; and no doubt he was an honest patriot.

After three weeks of absence, Robespierre returned to Paris. He had not been altogether idle. He brought back with him various letters, pamphlets and nondescript literature. And certain plans. The plans he carried behind his narrow forehead.

On his return to Paris Tallien went to see his Chief.

Robespierre had of late asserted himself more and more. Tallien with a large smile suffered his authority. On the whole it was safer to stand behind another man's coat-tails. Tallien was the soul of prudence. He had a hundred little pleasant subterfuges to evade the finger of the law. He would as it were shoot off the fireworks and then, spluttering with mirth, clamber into a hole and watch results.

He seldom came out of his hiding-place feeling aggrieved. The people were heart and soul with him. The people had small patience but vast credulity. They would swallow a whale—spurting blood and fire—as easily as a picked shrimp. Tallien loved his public. Loving them and knowing their little idiosyncrasies, he supplied them handsomely with rancid food. Not only Paris benefited by his literary and political organs. No little God-forsaken hamlet escaped his vigilance.

The hamlets and the little villages ignited at a spark. Mad terror reigned in those benighted regions. Reports came to hand of much bloodshed, pillage and incendiarism. Down south the *châteaux* burned merrily. The aristocrats, hunted from their homes, sought safety from imminent death in a hundred oddly ingenious disguises.

Tallien rubbed his hands as he mounted the stairs to Robespierre's modest office.

He listened outside the door, big ear to the keyhole. He fancied he heard voices. He was mistaken. The Chief was only, in his solitude, practicing oratory. There were certain speeches to be got off by rote—the words must slip smoothly from key to key. Robespierre never believed in inspiration. His method was one of calculation. He was very careful not to make mistakes. Such as Tallien might leap at a sound and be carried off their feet by their own eloquence. Spontaneity sometimes impresses the multitude, but more often than not it wearies them. Conciseness is seldom the gift of improvisation. Conciseness in this instance was essential. Robespierre mentally put his hand to the plow. He was clever enough to see the blood furrow—but he kept a clear head. Blood must flow. . . .

Tallien closed the door very gently. He took off his hat with a dignified gesture to his Chief.

"I have pleasure in seeing you back again, citizen," he said. "No doubt you have benefited by your holiday? How was the country looking?"

Robespierre faced him smiling. "Very pretty, thank you. Arras is a charming little town."

"A peaceful place where nothing unusual ever happens."

"Exactly."

"Surely sometimes the postboy gallops past at a rush?"

"Occasionally."

"When we have settled our little affairs we will both retire to Arras——"

"And lead a quiet and idle life——"

"And grow vegetables." Tallien unbuttoned his yellow gloves, and laid them very carefully on the table. "And now," he said, "to business."

Tallien was for immediate action—why shouldn't they gather the blossom instead of the fruit? The blossom was very beautiful. Hadn't he observed it at Arras? a place noted for its orchards. No doubt it was slightly extravagant, but he felt in an extravagant mood to-day. . . .

Robespierre snarled. If he couldn't talk sense (he said), what was the good of discussing business? So dear Tallien sobered down, sat down, and bent his sleek black head next the powdered wig affected by his rival, excuse us, his Chief. A subordinate mustn't contradict his superior. . . . "Exactly." . . . "Exactly." . . . "Exactly." . . . At lucid and precise intervals Tallien agreed to Robespierre's masterly scheme of organization.

"It'll go under the name of a spontaneous demonstration."

"Exactly."

"You take this district. It's not too much for you?"

"On the contrary."

"If you've time, sound St. Thomas. And speak to the women. I'll leave all the women to you. Your department."

Tallien smiled. "I may have some slight influence in that quarter," he admitted. "Very well, sir, I'll tackle the women."

"Put it to them plainly."

"A little embroidery, just a little—it pleases the women."

"Invent as many lies as you like."

"Or as many as I can," said Tallien, pleasantly. "I'm not infallible, citizen."

Robespierre removed his eyes from his sheaf of papers and looked up at Tallien. "No, you are not," he said. He said it rudely.

Tallien only smiled—generously. It wasn't his place to contradict his revered Chief. "Exactly," he said, in that even, smooth tone of his, which Robespierre found particularly exasperating.

When they'd arrived at a satisfactory solution of preliminaries—always a difficult job—Tallien referred, much against his will, to money matters.

"I'd be obliged by a temporary loan," he said.

"You've never yet paid me back a farthing."

"Exactly. And I won't until we've gathered the fruit." He smiled. "It's such a pretty sight. I'm a countryman myself. It's a pity wasting one's youth in a city. There's so much misery about. The queen—so they told me—had toothache last night."

"You hear everything?"

"Everything."

"You are having them carefully watched?"

Tallien held up his broad hands. "Every little thing which takes place at the Tuileries is carefully reported to us. I'm not the head of that department. All the same I take a fatherly interest in it. What man wouldn't? Family life is so purifying. The dauphin got a new musical-box for his birthday present. The king likes it enormously. It plays seven tunes. Seven is a lucky number—except when it is unlucky, of course. How about the loan,

citizen? Three hundred pieces of gold." He held out his broad-palmed hand.

Robespierre went to his drawer and counted out to him the exact sum. In a spirit of unwonted generosity he added an extra gold piece.

"For luck," he said.

"Thank you, kindly."

The money was no more his than Tallien's. They both appropriated public funds for their own uses. Tallien's clothes cost money. Tallien's life cost money. The "women" had to be paid. Spies had to be reimbursed. Extra editions—distributed in great masses, cost free—run into figures. Some one has to pay. The beauty of it was, and the sweet simplicity, that the aristocrats themselves "advanced" their *rentes* in the good of the cause. "It was heavenly," said Tallien. "So simple. You simply laid embargo on lawful property, and lo and behold, it became your own."

"My dear Robespierre," said Tallien, "I shouldn't wonder if we both died rich men."

"And full of honors," said the other, in dead seriousness. They had the queerest idea of honor.

We know—it's history, friends. They knew nothing, God forgive them. After all, they both had their punishments—maybe inadequate, but frightful for all that. We've got to follow Tallien a long way down the road—in his case it led to a bridge and a pedler's tray and a blind man's dog and a beggar's whine. "Charité, charité pour l'amour de Dieu!" It is an immense way off. We must first dance our puppet in the sunlight, and give him his good days—his full meals—his less full meals, before we fling him a halfpenny to buy his beggar's daily ration. . . .

Robespierre hadn't such a long rope. He twirled and twirled and twirled, very rapidly. There never was such a fantastic, dancing, self-made deity as his godship. As we all know, he ended—in a shriek—under the knife. *He'd* set it up, in the brazen light of day—why should he shriek?

It was what he might have expected. For years he'd fabricated a ludicrous book of faith—all lies, nothing but lies, abominable lies.

“Good-morning, *citoyen*.”

“Good-morning, *citoyen*.”

Ugh! What a pair!

CHAPTER XXIII

ALL the garbage of centuries seemed to collect in the gardens of the Tuileries. No man could wade clear of this tideless sea of decay. It required a torrential wave, a monster wave to suck in its whirling depths the horror of it all.

And still the king turned his face to the wall and persisted in playing piquet. His object was to save the queen anxiety.

In those brooding days of July, 1792, it was pathetic (and in a way sublime) to watch God's anointed act the part of a bourgeois *père de famille*. He was all smiles in the inner circle. He had his little jokes—always well received. In that little family circle they all played their parts, all eager to deceive each other and evade dangerous topics.

Questions would crop up now and again. It was humanly impossible to keep the dauphin's musical box tinkling day and night, drowning sad care.

Care peeped in at the curtained, sunlit windows; care flaunted in the queen's *parterre*, and even her roses lost their bloom.

In those troublesome times the queen occupied herself much with needlework. With her embroidery-needle feverishly flashing to and fro, the queen would sit and listen to the king's make-believe absurdity.

She saw through his labored acting. Now and again the needlework was flung to the floor, and her Majesty would impetuously rise and fling herself into the king's wide-stretched arms. "Oh, my all! Oh, my life!" she would moan, and stroke with her curiously thin hand the king's florid cheeks—fat enough in spite of all the woe in France.

France, the dear land of her adoption, of tradition, of royal state, of deep-rooted culture—plunging towards her doom. What could save the royal house of France? What! A miracle of grace? A prophet might arise and, barefooted, thrust aside the massed enemies of order—restore faith to the goodly land of France. God was good.

They had their faith. In all this turmoil of rank heresy and blasphemy, the Cross comforted the royal house. Their religion was very simple and elastic, but yet it held a potent promise. Men might forsake them but “le bon Dieu” would safeguard His children. Only to look at Sister Elizabeth shook atheism to its core. Her loving counsel was founded on the rock of Christ crucified.

The storm broke in fierce suddenness. It beat on the private door. The king—unarmed, except by the majesty of patience—met the residue of his people face to face. A crowd they were and very hellish, men and women all armed with gibes, murmuring rage and intoxicated triumph. They had forced their entrance into the Presence. Who could deny them their right! Past the guards they had rushed—up marble stairs, broad and splendid—in clattering sabots and toeless shoes, in rags and breeches of coarse, black stuff, a clamoring, fiendish deputation from the world beyond the palace gates.

The king received them in royal audience; this incongruous, impossible rabble, the scum of the gutter and red revolutionism. They jabbered of their needs, and flashed on the king’s majesty eyes where dull surprise sat uppermost. He was not afraid of them?

“Feel my heart,” said the king to a bragging ruffian who had questioned his courage. The crowd had laughed. And as suddenly someone had remembered his rags, his folly, and his daring devilry.

Tallien sat in his private office, writing with great haste.

Tallien never liked to disappoint his adherents. This time he had succeeded in surprising his friends. Dealing

with the matter uppermost in the thoughts of men—the raid on the palace—he deplored the unnecessary violence to the king's majesty. He hinted at the inviolable sacredness of home life. His readers gathered from Tallien's flowing periods that an attack on the Constitution would, in comparison, have been a public act of loyalty to the Nation (as distinct from the Throne), an act well pleasing in the sight of Heaven.

All over Paris the news spread. The Press no longer held with the people! The people were getting out of hand—the people must be checked. If allowed unbridled license, who could answer for their deeds? The Public Accuser shook his head—one or two of his fellow coadjutors saw him smile. When Robespierre smiled—so they said—old Nick was busy.

Men in the streets thrust their woolen caps deeper on their brows, and thundered disapproval. The people would fight for their liberty unaided by these faint-hearted patriots, who doubtless had been bought over by the government.

It was a close game. At one time Tallien went in danger of his life. His neutral-tinted leaders made more enemies than friends.

The king, with kind good-nature, readily forgave the laxity of respect shown towards his own person.

"They acted in ignorance," he said. Who knew but that out of much wrangling an understanding might arise? The king saw himself the hero of the hour, falling on the repentant necks of his people. He would weep; they would weep. And the queen would be able to spend the month of August at the little Trianon. She had always liked this miniature palace. The king remembered many happy days spent on the south terrace . . . it would be very pleasant once again to live the life of an idle country gentleman. . . . The gardens of the Trianon were very pretty. The king recalled the play of the little fountain in the courtyard; it hardly interfered with the hum of insects or the gentle twittering of the birds. He had

never cared for the magnificence of Versailles. The display of artificial water in the pompous gardens struck him as wearisome. One can have too much of a good thing. Louis XIV. (God rest his soul) had been consequential. Sometimes he'd over-reached his mark. Louis XIV., with a pious prayer for forgiveness, gave *le Grand Monarque* the blame of the present disordered condition. He had taxed his subjects (what with one thing and another) just beyond the limit. If anyone was to be blamed for present calamity, *le grand Louis* must bear his share in events. A grievance can lie dormant for a hundred years and more, and suddenly spring to appalling activity. . . . The king rubbed his eyes and went in to supper. Food was generally his solution of a difficult question.

The leading conspirators in these delicate operations had every reason to congratulate themselves on unusually keen vision. They had calculated to a nicety each move in the game. Never once had they fallen foul of themselves (though often of each other). If the Constitution failed to march, the Revolution sprinted like an athlete. There were sinews and muscles to the fore; good strong men only beseeching to be allowed to act in the interest of the common cause; there were hungry eyes feasting on the slender proportions of "turtle"-fed ladies and gentlemen; these deeply incriminated ladies and gentlemen of aristocratic lineage (no crime viler, no slur of greater significance)—they, and they alone, encumbered the earth! To have done with them, once and for all, to finish off their doleful tale of sin and shame! "Friends and patriots, long live liberty! Long live our glorious country!"

Tallien rubbed his hands as, unobserved, he watched the good citizens of Paris taking counsel together. They were fit, very fit. A *little* more oiling—a *little* more patience, a trifle, a mere nothing, and the situation would declare itself.

Still rubbing his hands, this wide-awake politician would return to his editorial duties. Though it was quite late he'd sit up practically all night writing a glowing state-

ment of the National Danger. War had been declared. It behooved every man to look to his weapon. He drew a tormenting picture of Prussian invasion, disaster, defeat, and the tenfold retribution of aristocratic rule. Was she ready—France awake—to submit to the doles of hereditary wage-givers? Was all to go for naught, distress and hunger, death and wrong, centuries of oppression? He sharpened invisible pikes, he dropped molten lead into visionary wounds . . . he did a good night's work from his point of view.

Then, over-tired, he would roll on his narrow bed, dressed as he was, booted feet sprawling on the counterpane, and go to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV

“I’LL go alone!” bellowed Devin.

“Tra-la-la,” hummed Térézia.

“You are the most insufferable fool on earth!”

“Cela dépend.”

It was a very hot morning, close, sultry, not a breath of air stirring. And here was little Devin in one of his “tempers” inflicting himself on his poor lady, and she not yet properly dressed. For the matter of that, Térézia in the heat of August floated about until noon in the airiest of costumes. (Weather permitting, she kept to one garment; sandaled feet and a massive plait uncoiling itself down her superb back; a thick layer of powder on neck and face to mitigate the sun’s rays. . . .)

Seated by the open window, she was sipping a cup of chocolate. Her dressing-room was strewn with new dresses and odds and ends of millinery. She had just given her Paris dressmaker an interview, and made a selection for the autumn season. Trade was bad and the prices on the whole moderate. Térézia, on satisfactory terms, had bought a large stock of unnecessary clothes. Neither in September nor in October were parties likely to be given. How could she know that? What was the date?—how quickly time passed—August the tenth.

Fresh news from Paris had brought Devin in a towering passion into Térézia’s dressing-room. He would rout her out—the lazy slut! The good-for-nothing baggage who had dishonored his stainless name, dishonored the blood of a hundred earls—or something in that style. The *civdevant* marquis, now that all titles were of equal value, had a prodigious respect for his House. Were not the de

Fontenays equal in rank to the de Villequiers? The duke, by the way, plotting in Brussels. Happy duke—beyond the borders!

Only two days old, the news from Paris—but portentous! The new squadron, dubbed the Marseillais, a set of fierce fire-brands, had come to blows with the Filles Saint-Thomas men, and, in their trail, a rabble of partisans. A good many had been killed and wounded. The marching women had been the worst—they had shrieked and egged the men on, hurling words and hurling stones. They had stormed towards the Tuileries.

“Yes?” said Térézia, expectantly.

“Is not that enough? The Swiss held the rabble at bay—and at length the soldiers lost interest in their quarrel. By nightfall Paris slept.”

“Well, I don’t see,” began Térézia, plaintively, “if they are quiet, why you should make such a noise. Do go away, please.”

She pushed aside her cup of chocolate and moved towards her toilet table. Deftly she coiled her hair and tried on a new hat.

Devin walked across the room and as quickly snatched at the hat and deliberately trampled on it.

Térézia behaved very sweetly. Nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand would have taken such an incident in a very bad spirit. She hardly looked at the hat, nor at her husband, executing a war-dance with lack of grace.

“If I were you, Devin,” she said, “I would take some medicine. It is very bad for the constitution to give way to temper and does no good in the world. If you had spoken reasonably I would have been pleased to give you my best attention. The fact is you tire me. Your methods are not my methods. Bear me out—” she pointed to the flattened hat,—“I am not in the least cross though you have ruined a charming creation. I am clever enough to know that I can get a new hat. And also a new husband. That is why I put up with you. If I thought we

were inseparable I would weep my eyes out—as it is, I can afford to be generous.”

With the majesty of a goddess she crossed the room and held out her hand. “I’ll forgive you,” she said.

He in duty bound kissed her hand and begged her pardon. (He always did.)

“Thank you, my friend. I am sorry,” he said (limply).

“Don’t mention it. You have many trials. It would be wicked of me not to do you so much justice.”

Térédia with unwonted graciousness asked Devin to help her with her correspondence. Defeated in every point, he meekly submitted. For two hours they worked side by side at Térédia’s commodious new writing-table. Her old desk (a little gem) stood against the wall stuffed full with love-letters. For some reason—probably romantic—the charming *ci-devant* marchioness still penned her “personal” missives, lilac-scented at this inconvenient table.

When Devin had successfully written, in a perfectly disguised handwriting, a series of incriminatory instructions (each one of which might have cost him his head, red hair and all), Térédia rewarded him with a kiss.

“My great big tyrant,” she said, “when you are nice you are very nice.”

He returned the compliment. Even though he loathed her he felt the spell of her womanhood. Heat suited Térédia. Never had her bare throat and her indiscreetly veiled shoulders looked so white or so velvety. Devin noticed a little blue vein on her firm bosom.

She was quick to perceive his glance. There was no one else staying in the house. Térédia felt a bit out of it and dull, and she *had* neglected Devin, and she *had* caused him intense annoyance, and strictly speaking she hadn’t always treated him with the highest consideration.

She was tired of writing incriminating letters for the good of her fellow-sufferers. (The reward was slow in coming.) She laid down her charming mother-o’-pearl, gold-nibbed pen, and let “ce pauvre monstre” encircle her

waist with a curiously flabby arm—even at that moment Térézia felt it was flabby—she suffered his embrace, she suffered his kiss. Her beautiful eyes were wonderfully soft as they met his. . . .

Devin long remembered August the tenth as a red-letter day in his existence. Térézia had seldom been so charming, so pliable, so complaisant.

The whole afternoon the happy family had spent in a clover field. The little Georges came in for a lion's share of his parents' attention; they had played with him, they had invented little stories to please him; they had laughed at each other's wit. When Devin made a ball of white clover and flung it gently into Térézia's lap, she had flung it neatly back again into his outstretched palm. Georges thought it such a good game—they had all three laughed. After which mamma had unpacked a "surprise" basket—in it all manner of good things. Little Georges could eat as many sponge-cakes as he liked, and papa shared with mamma a bowl of strawberries and cream. They all had some of the rich yellow cream—though mamma said it was ruinous for her figure. Papa said nothing could spoil anything so perfect. Little Georges laughed. He was a gay, happy child and he took his treats splendidly. He didn't know what day it was—and didn't care—but he felt sure he had never had a happier one.

It was seven o'clock before the party broke up. Georges rode home all the way on papa's shoulder; mamma following, swinging her garden hat by a velvet string—through the shady avenue they walked in a very dilatory manner. Little Georges was sleepy—he had eaten a good many sponge cakes—and Térézia was thoughtful. In these strenuous times it was selfish to be idle . . . she sighed. Devin looked round.

"What is it?" he said very kindly.

"Oh, nothing. Fate is inexorable. If life had been different, what a perfect wife I would have made! You've liked me to-day?"

"I will love you for ever if you will allow me."

She only sighed again. "We cannot control our destiny or our inclination," she said sadly.

She slipped her hand through Devin's arm and smiled. "This day is yours—come what may."

She felt his pulses beat.

"My dear, my dear," he said.

She nodded.

After supper, reclining on a couch in the library, dressed in fair white silk, one great red rose on her breast, Térézia poured out her heart to her attentive husband. She looked very captivating, this simple child of nature, as she pleaded her own cause prettily—her youth, her thoughtlessness, her beauty. He asked himself in bewilderment, "Have I given her of my best? Have I given her of my time? Have I protected this woman God gave me?" To all these heart-burning queries he could only shake his head—negatively. He had been the culpable one, he had been blind to madness! Térézia had wanted telling, not in harsh and ungainly language, but kindly, lovingly, as you'd speak to a little child. How blind he had been not to fathom her incomparable nature! There was a fund of sweetness, of diffidence, of true womanly dignity in her character. She'd only wanted his sympathy, so she said. He tried to believe her, looking at the deep red rose at her bosom, which he had gathered for her only two hours ago.

All the same it was bewildering.

She clasped her hands over her head—a favorite gesture of hers—"Oh," she said, "I am so disappointed in myself. I ought to have behaved better. There is no shadow of excuse for a woman to accept love where she cannot faithfully return it. My sin is a sin of omission. Looking back I realize my culpability. I have never loved!" (she almost sobbed). "Believe me or believe me not, I am telling you the absolute truth. I am tired of my existence. I want a solid interest in life."

She looked at Devin—perhaps he didn't look solid

enough to tempt her to invite him to step in and fill the vacancy?

All was chaos, violence and death. She found a parallel in the present wickedness to her own blighted condition. The ineffable sadness of it all wrung no reproach from her lips. She exonerated Devin. He shouldn't burden his life by her "folly" . . . she wouldn't allow it. . . .

He did not at last know if he was standing on his head or his heels; in any case Térézia was a blameless woman! He could not say less in face of her poignant self-reproaches.

"Bear with me," she said. "It won't be for long. In a very little while you will be a free agent."

He remembered their pending divorce. The thought shook him completely. He would cancel the suit—so he said. Their case shouldn't come before the Courts.

"Why not?" said Térézia meekly. "Our petition is very clear. I would not dream of demanding a sacrifice."

Devin with hot cheeks answered her that circumstances change the man (or woman) and that he for one would not look on their reconciliation as a sacrifice.

"For how long?" she said, without a shadow of bitterness. "You are temperamentally jealous——"

"You have tried me, Térézia."

"How you err! My heart is asleep; one day it may wake."

On this reflection she closed her eyes and lay immovable.

He also was sunk in deep speculation; the outlook on the whole was fluctuating. Why on earth couldn't she love her husband like an honest woman!

He was near to frowning, but Térézia disarmed him. "Great big tyrant," she said, "assert your authority! I am waiting to be taught my lesson. Women are such adaptable creatures, and are always the slaves of men. I could adore a blackguard if he was also a strong man. . . . Don't frown; I would not hurt your feelings for anything in the world. Devin, I ask your forgiveness."

"How so?" he murmured. "You despise me."

"Indeed I don't. You are immeasurably my superior. You at least stand by your word."

"What am I to believe?"

"Look at me."

He looked.

"Hold my hand."

He held it.

"My husband," she said, "my dear husband, do trust me."

He did not trust her, but he kissed her passionately instead. Térézia was just as pleased. She felt herself to be a saint, a wife, and a mother all in one captivating whole. Poor Devin . . . he was dreadfully ugly . . . yet somehow she felt touched at his uncouth demonstration of affection. She would yield herself entirely to his wishes. She would suffer him gladly.

CHAPTER XXV

CHANCE had left the royal family in the hand of Destiny.

Can we read, in the scroll of history, a more pitiable tale than that of this little, very devoted family closeted together on the evening of "Red Friday"?

The Family, with the Family's usual elasticity of temperament, had hoped for the best. They had even, as the day lagged on, ventured to ridicule the situation—"Le tocsin ne rend pas." . . . All this blatant hurrying of armed men and gloomy-visaged courtiers, ready to die for king and country, was quite unnecessary. The clamor of bells from steeples, sombre in the night dusk, had rung to dull patriots—they were asleep, no whit inclined to rise and risk their ill-starred lives. . . .

Unloosed rage is not so easily kenneled. The simultaneous ringing of all the church bells in Paris had been heard in palace and hovel alike.

Only the head of this particular little family, which calls for our immediate sympathy, refused to credit the truth. Indeed, so little was the king intimidated by personal danger that out he marched—alone and unattended—to face his rebellious troops. He would speak to them. His reception was such that, very red in the face, he was obliged to return with his errand unfulfilled.

The royal ladies had underrated the king's simple bravery—they were horrified when they detected his absence and overwhelmed with joy at his safe return. They had also underestimated the power of brute passion. Apparently these mad revolutionists were ready to die, snarling; rage fed them as fire ignites oil.

Towards dusk, the family, collected in one room, saw

in the palace gardens and far beyond the iron barriers a sea of faces, one mass of faces and yet one Face. . . .

"Let us go," said the king.

The family never argued with their head. They went. A doleful little procession of six—three ladies, a boy, a girl, and a stout gentleman who carried himself with great dignity. They walked over to the House of Assembly through treble ranks of sullen subjects. The wind swept—so they say—the first autumn leaves across their path, and the boy of the party, bounding forward, caught hold of a handful and playfully flicked them in the face of a stalwart Marseillais. . . .

In the palace they had just vacated, brave men, of scant argument and magnificent dullness, were loading their weapons—each man at his post—eying the Face beyond the barriers. Vaunt them to the skies, these courageous dupes who carried their belief in the face of utter blankness. They were there to guard the sacred person of majesty. His majesty was on his way to the scaffold. They knew it not—he knew it not—all they knew for certain was that the king had left them in charge of his honor. For the sake of honor many sublime follies have been committed. Theoretically speaking there was no need for this fanatical sacrifice of life and these deeds of personal valor—this butchery of innocent men. It all fitted in with the lamentable story.

Robespierre had unleashed the hounds of hell, and, as the evening wore on, and a fitful moon hovered in the cloudy sky, all over Paris the hounds bayed in chorus, well-fed, well-content. . . .

All Paris sang except the aristocrats. Among aristocrats supper went a-begging that night.

The king was the exception; harassed by "events," he ate hungrily of a stew of beef and vegetables placed at his disposal by his legislative council.

They also provided him with temporary accommodation until more suitable quarters could be found. The rooms were very small—but all the safer—giving directly on the

Hall of Assembly—dark, low-pitched, evil-smelling, and three in number by courtesy—one a cupboard, or the queen's bedroom, if you prefer it. Such the sanctuary of France! The king solemnly declared that he found his quarters "sufficient pending a better arrangement." The queen said nothing. In the little cupboard-room, on a hard bare bench, she sat—dazed by events.

Sister Elizabeth put the children to bed on a makeshift mattress. She was dimly conscious of unspeakable horror. She knew nothing of mob rule, revolution and primitive democracy. She had never gone hungry to bed in all her gentle life, nor lacked for friends or amusement. . . . How could a kind princess realize that decency and mercy were bankrupt, and could borrow no more in a world of brutal facts?

CHAPTER XXVI

IT was quite late, nearer midnight, when a small, thin person accompanied by a tall, broad person, both wrapped in voluminous cloaks—lanterns in hand—walked up the much-disfigured gardens of the Tuileries.

They swung their lanterns on comparatively peaceful surroundings. Here and there a lawless and no doubt greedy citizen was stealthily, under cover of darkness and sheltering trees, creeping towards the battered gates with booty cumbersome or light of weight. You could pick and choose as you liked in that tumbled, broken heap of valuables lying in the courtyard just as they fell, when, with ruthless vandalism, the invaders had pitched the royal furniture out of gaping windows. Some were for a people's bonfire, a mighty, substantial blaze—others for moderation and personal profit; the moderates spied, in the pell-mell of objects, articles well worth the carrying; gold pieces and silver pieces, ornate mirrors, comfortable carpets and, by the Lord, yes! the quaintest of satin cushions, embroidered no doubt by queenly fingers. Some capacious wit vowed, with very blasphemous oaths, he would inherit that puffed satin conceit and for the fun of the thing stuff it into homely use. He would make a footstool of the queen's pillow and kick it mercilessly. . . . Cruel words were cheap on August the tenth.

More choice oaths heralded the discovery of old wine. The people sang in the immense cellars, and danced, clasped hand to hand, among the dusty bins. Refreshed they rushed to new deeds of burning patriotism. Blood was better than wine! Blood was intoxicating!—reeling drunk these loathsome thieves. . . .

The two cloaked figures threaded their way through the

débris. They let their lanterns play on a considerable heap of dead.

The taller figure made some remark to his companion, but he got no response. Picking their way, they entered the smoke-grimed vestibule of the palace.

It was very quiet.

The fitful moon, drifting clear of the clouds, looked in placidly into an upper chamber. It was a large room, and once upon a time—at no distant date—it had been a lady's drawing-room, full of her little possessions, her pet flowers, her favorite pictures, her easiest chairs. Here of evenings, very likely, the owner of the room (with a very pretty taste) would sing and play the harpsichord or display to an intimate circle of relations and friends those little touches of feminine grace and feminine wit which sum up a woman's, a home woman's charm. We can without difficulty see the inviting pictures, the fine, faint colors, the dim gilding, the white paneling, the shadowy curtains—fluttering in the summer breeze . . . twilight, which is to music its natural setting, gives to our *interieur* its true value. And when the music, with a ripple of modulated chords, dies into memory, into the twilight scheme steal the soft tones of cultured voices brightly discussing some agreeable subject, disagreeing and agreeing . . . the tinkle of a silver spoon, the candle-light, the curling steam from a tea-kettle and a general laugh at some witty sally—received and given in excellent fellowship. . . .

The room—so very recently a frame of human affection—had, by some sinister jugglery, lost its true character; the disorder was heartbreaking, the dirt astonishing. What incredibly muddy footsteps must have dug into the soft carpet, stained by uglier marks than clay. The curtains hung in tattered wisps, and all the movable furniture had been carried away. It was a sorry spectacle; yes, and in the light of the drifting moon and the stationary glitter of a couple of lanterns, not a pleasant sight. Across the threshold to the right lay two corpses huddled

together in a pool of blood—one a king's man, the other one of Robespierre's tools—a poor blackguard he, huge of limb and dirty of attire. There were many such hugging the earth below, with splintered skull or gaping wound. They were of priceless value, these erstwhile ruffians, vagabonds and true patriots—now dead men to be avenged.

In the centre of the room stood a deal table, chipped and broken, and two or three cane chairs carried from God knows where, to accommodate tired patriots. On the table stood an empty wine-bottle. The bottle finished, the honest patriots had gone elsewhere. It was a big palace and full of likely treasure. The empty rooms did not attract the public. There was nothing to do in a dismantled room, but, maybe, kick the body of a mad Swiss. The Swiss had fired on the people—the obstinate, pigheaded, muddle-brained gentlemen who, when the swarm was upon them—twenty, thirty, forty to one—still kept their swords level, playing with a nicety of purpose. Forty to one—what boots the most finished swordsmanship in the world? Glory? Glory is a loose expression and comfortless on occasions. Maybe the Swiss were hewn down in a nimbus of heavenly radiance; as a corps of dead men they looked a poverty-struck company. Most of them, besides being frightfully used, had been partially or entirely stripped; as negative objects they were dispiriting, these stalwart men who had known how to die with a very hazy notion as to why.

A sound broke the stillness, very faint, a little tinkling melody, plaintively reminiscent of a waltz-tune. Never was there such an incongruous air. The waltz was followed by the opening bars of an ambitious march—this a labored piece of music—the mechanical contrivance wheezy at times.

Seated in the queen's private drawing-room a patriot was amusing himself by churning out the tunes from the dauphin's dear little plaything. It was a new toy to the patriot and struck him as being extremely cunning.

He went on repeating the tunes—almost mechanically—half listening to other sounds. His companion had spoken twice, now he was silent; only that inadequate dance measure filling vast spaces. . . .

Through the wide-flung doors there loomed an immensity of vacant rooms. The palace had been forsaken. By order.

The cloaked man with the musical bump sat loosely on his chair, legs sprawling, and arms flung wide on the stained table. His companion had dropped his cloak—he very upright, very recognizable, very inquisitive. He peered into the darkness with short-sighted eyes, palely blue about the lips, a sickly, diseased, abnormal fellow—abnormally rejoicing. He did his thanksgiving in silent prayer. No shouting or playing the fool for him.

His sprawling companion had never ceased to comment, to wonder, to suggest, to glory immoderately. Never had a juicier plum fallen into a more grateful mouth! He of the sprawling limbs was one wide revealing smile.

The lantern stood on the soiled table and the moon shone fitfully.

There were mysterious tappings and creakings in the vast chamber, mysterious sighs, mysterious footfalls. . . . Tallien could have sworn they were not alone.

He roused himself, pushed the musical-box to tinkling extremity, sang in a cracked whisper a deplorable verse—overturned the empty bottle and sent it crashing through the window.

The smaller man sat quite still, a faintly humorous smile hovering over his attentive face.

"This expedition was a happy idea," said he.

"Think so?" Tallien tried to hide his terror by extreme bravado. He hated the little blue-lipped devil opposite him. (All hatred is more or less rooted in fear.)

Robespierre put out his hand and quite gently removed the musical-box. "I don't like it," he said simply.

"I am sorry——"

Robespierre tapped his long thin fingers on the table. "For a beginning it is not bad," he said.

Tallien laughed. "Lord, but you are modest!"

"Not at all. I want a great many heads to avenge that poor fellow's broken skull." (He jerked his thumb in the direction of the killed.) "Roughly speaking, I should say we have lost some two hundred men, we'll say three hundred. You've got your notebook?"

Tallien drew the lantern nearer to himself. With trembling fingers he fished out of his pocket a soiled leather-covered volume of no inconsiderable bulk.

Bending close to the light he scanned some very closely-written pages.

"Addresses?"

"Yes."

"How many?"

"Some thirty thousand."

Robespierre bit his thumb-nail savagely. "All suspected persons to be seized. Given ventilation, the prisons will answer our purpose. Movable property—*hein!*"

"You will go gently, brother?"

His little brother laughed. "Very gently. Those who speak——" He did not finish his sentence, but very tenderly he clasped his throat with both his hands. "Even the best of patriots can die—suddenly. Life is in the hands of God——"

"Subject to the approval of a select committee."

"Exactly."

"We have got tools in plenty. I have never dreamed of such a procession. It was splendid."

"Yes."

"What a symbolic flight!" said Tallien. "Crowns and miniver trains and heirs-apparent. His heirship is of heaven."

"I'd never kill a child."

"I'd stamp out the breed."

"You are cruel and new to your honors. Some public men can't stomach approval."

Tallien bit his lips and kept silence. He hated the blue-lipped Samaritan who would not have a hand in killing children. Who cared a damn—one way or another? He looked around the melancholy room filled with a sickly, indescribable odor of sweat, blood, spilled liquors and discharged cartridges.

"I am your man," he said breezily, "your very stanch man. I am heart and soul with you. Let them live!" He shrugged his shoulders. "We'll turn the children out to grass and turn them out good patriots at the same time—there is a notable scheme! One family, one adoring family, black and white, turned drabby gray. Will they mix easily?" He laughed again.

A door creaked sharply.

Tallien fingered his loaded pistol. "It is not safe here. One of those blackguardly Swiss may be alive. I am no match for a trained soldier."

Robespierre rose languidly.

"Any man could beat you," he said slowly.

"The citizen is pleased to have his little joke."

It was so dark they could not see each other's faces.

Robespierre jumped deftly aside. "No, my friend. The time is not ripe—you must, we must both cultivate patience."

"I did nothing."

"We never do anything when we fail or are detected. I will trouble you for your pistol."

Blankly staring, Tallien obeyed.

Robespierre very carefully unloaded it. "Shooting is bad form. Another time try a knife."

Tallien with a cold hand accepted his now harmless weapon. "You leave me unarmed," he said, politely.

"No, you carry my secrets. I'd kill you with pleasure, but unfortunately I cannot manage without your assistance."

Tallien puffed out his chest. "We pull pretty evenly," he agreed.

They got over their little difference pretty easily. Life

and death at that moment wasn't of great consequence. (Man's an adaptive creature.) They passed off the "joke" with an awful jest at the expense of a dead patriot—shot through the heart—lying cheek by jowl with his mortal enemy . . . *they'd* come to death grips, the king's man and the people's man. "There is something very godlike about the people," said Tallien, slipping the musical box into his coat-pocket.

Robespierre nodded his head, waggishly. They were bent on good sport—and good-fellowship. Their sparring (call it murder) had only been a tentative trial of strength . . . they pulled pretty equally—as Tallien had admitted (rather regretfully).

They talked affably for a while of the situation.

"The Luxembourg," said Robespierre, "is too windy a nest for our exotic birds."

Tallien whistled. "Dear little birds," he said.

"The Temple is far more suitable. A cosy, quiet place, with thick walls and strong doors—eh?"

"Not bad."

"Have you a better project?"

"Have you, sir?"

"Come now, come now, none of your playfulness, sir."

"There's the Conciergerie, you know—very dark, very wholesome for froward majesty. I suppose they'll keep their titles, complimentary titles?"

"Damn me, if they will!"

"Spoken as a true patriot. It'd be silly, very silly."

"There's the incredible majesty of example, citizen, to be taken into consideration." Robespierre cleared his throat and spat on the floor. "That fat booby shall set the record and take a prominent place in history. I'd be the last man to deny him his privileges. The descendant of how many kings?"

"Sixty, I believe; quite a show."

"It is something to be the pick of the bunch." Robespierre edged forward on his seat, leaned over the spattered deal table and laid his hand affectionately on Tal-

lien's arm. "He'll also be the last," he murmured. In the light of the moon, drifting through the clouds, his pale eyes had an extraordinary glassy stare.

Tallien shook himself free from the detaining hand. (He couldn't help himself—damn him if he could!) "What an honor!" he said reverently. "How will he take it?"

Robespierre screwed his face into that tentative expression which he called a smile. Anyhow he bared his little, pointed, discolored teeth to the moon. "Well, my friend; very well," he said.

The moon covered her face. Only the lantern twinkled between the two men, and a few unmentionable thoughts. They still had a few subjects they couldn't speak about . . . the fruit wasn't ripe. They could wait, they could always wait, as Deputy Tallien would say, with his large smile, and immense good-nature. He had also a fund of optimism. And you must say he had something to back him. Considering everything, his affair had marched.

At that moment—both the gentlemen's nerves were pretty tightly braced—it had, with one thing and another been a racketing day—a tremendous crash, accompanied by demoniac shouts and no less demoniac cheers, rent the air. It came from the direction of the Place Dauphin, where stood the great equestrian statue of His Majesty Louis XIV.

Tallien sprang to the open window.

"Hurrah!" he cried exultantly, waving his hand above his head. "They've got him down! I always said that if you left the people to themselves they'd prove their quality. Great, I call it—great! Hear 'em? Lusty devils. And they'll want more. Broken stones aren't broken heads—ha! ha! I see their little game. God forbid that I'd interfere with—justice."

Robespierre, who had also got up, didn't say a word until the other man had buried his transports in a checked handkerchief. It was a green handkerchief with bars of yellow, red and blue—very vivid, very large.

While Tallien was blowing his big nose—you remember the shape?—Robespierre spoke, without the least exaggeration.

"They put him up a hundred years ago, and a day," he said.

Tallien flung back his head and pocketed his handkerchief. His very gesture was extravagant. "A hundred years," he said. "What's a hundred years!"

"We shan't last as long," said Robespierre, sorrowfully (and accurately).

Tallien stepped back from the window—the din had somewhat subsided. In the gardens below, men were running to and fro in the moonlight—such a coy Lady Moon. On this night, of all nights, was she flirting with poor human beings? It looked like it.

Tallien dug Robespierre playfully in the ribs. He was in high good-humor, as the father might be at the unexpected prowess of his family—and who tickles 'em! . . . "We aren't stone images, eh?" he said. "But true flesh and blood patriots." He peered inquisitively into the other's pallid face, shaking his head dolefully. "Not much blood and not much flesh. Drink cream, cream—"—he curled his tongue over his thick, smooth lips—"and other things. I'm thirsty. Let's satisfy ourselves—eh?"

Stepping very carefully over the dead and the dying—one of the dying did actually turn at sight of them, but only to look away—they made their way unchallenged into the public street. They had come by way of the private gardens, where the queen's roses bloomed, washed in dew. It was a warm night—full of scents, by no means all agreeable. Robespierre shivered. The mortally wounded man, who'd moved, had given given him a turn . . . it was a very sad world. He wondered if the people hadn't overstepped their privileges in breaking up that monumental piece of sculpture? It was bordering on extravagance. Robespierre didn't like extravagance. . . . Tallien was rejoicing—he was heart and soul with

the people—he was one of them. He walked very upright, swinging his long arms to and fro.

“Put out the lantern,” said Robespierre.

“Exactly,” murmured Tallien, in a dreamy voice. “We don’t want to be seen.” He did as he was told.

The narrow Rue Santerre loomed darkly in front of them. They hurried on. Only once did Tallien place a warning hand on his companion’s narrow shoulders. “Listen,” he said; “what is that?”

In the street corner there sat a beggar, huddled up in his rags. He was deplorably crippled.

“Singing all to yourself, citizen?” said Tallien, pleasantly. “It is a great night, I’ll allow it, a prophetic night.”

Tallien slipped a piece of money into the beggar’s hand. He thanked him perfunctorily and continued his melancholy dirge. The words clipped into Tallien’s memory. Long after he’d flung himself on his bed they haunted him—pshaw!

Le front ridé, les cheveux gris,
Les sourcilz cheuz, les yeulx estains,
Qui faisoient regars et ris,
Dont maintz marchons furent attains,
Nez courbé, de beaulté loingtains,
Oreilles pendans et moussues,
Le vis pally, mort et destains,
Menton foncé, joues peaussues.

BOOK II
TERROR

CHAPTER XXVII

YOU may remember that we casually mentioned the presence, at the Gala performance at the Odéon, of a young officer (sucking an orange) whose appearance, despite his admittedly fine eyes, had not impressed Mademoiselle Claire favorably.

We are sorry to say that this incomprehensible young man (even at a considerable distance of time we are still rather under his sway) had, through his own negligence, been obliged to send in his papers and resign his commission in his majesty's army. He had outstayed his leave at Ajaccio, and in consequence we find him prowling round Paris, in the wake of a revolutionary rabble, with nothing better to do than to speculate in real estate property and the probable date of his next meal.

He was deplorably dressed. Deprived of his uniform he'd eked out his civilian clothes with such parts of his military outfit as might pass muster. His small, neat feet were cased in large, clumsy field boots (little men love big boots, and walk heavily—it gives them consequence), a slouch hat, thrust low on his brow, almost concealed his fine eyes, but gave free egress to his wisps of untidy dark hair—a forelock hung right over one of his nicely penciled eyebrows. In spite of his slovenly dress, he was a good-looking boy—not tall but well-proportioned, and well-knit. He was no weakling, which makes his plight seem all the sadder. His lips—though Mlle. Claire hadn't noticed them—were “good”—not good in a religious sense, but from an artistic point of view; they were very well shaped—so was his nose; for the matter of that, so was his face. We repeat it, he was a handsome boy, in spite of his wicked little scowl. He habitually scowled at every-

one. He walked hastily forward, covering the ground with extraordinarily long strides, not graceful. There was something angular about his movements. He seemed to be in a fever of impatience—probably with himself. We can imagine him belaboring his own mind—"Get on—get on, can't you?"

The whole world was topsy-turvy, and when the world is topsy-turvy there is always a chance for an alert young man to make his mark. "Get on—get on!" he mumbled fiercely, digging his small, finely-shaped hands deep into the pockets of his deplorably shabby coat.

"I will!" he called aloud, considerably startling a dear old lady who was crossing the road in front of him. He must have bawled. Lots of people were bawling on that day. The king, the queen, and the rest of the royal family, had just gone into residence in the Temple. All the state prisons, large and small, were chock-full with suspected individuals of the hated class. It was sufficient to be of that class to come under suspicion. A coroneted handkerchief would have been fatal in the mean Rue des Quatre Vents—one of those narrow streets which cut through old Paris.

It was a bleak, poverty-struck street. Many hingeless shutters flapped in the wind—here and there a few dilapidated shops, principally dealing in cheap food commodities; a tailor not above patching—a cobbler who never dreamed of doing anything else; a public-house with a queer sign hanging over the door, representing a blue-skinned, gold-mottled cow with enormous poached-egg eyes. An ancient house, built of solid black oak, with its gable towards the street. . . .

Not far off from this hostelry a pawnbroker hung out his golden balls. His little shop was approached from the street itself by a flight of steep stone stairs—his little shop-window was crowded with a heterogeneous collection of—priceless treasures!

It was the day of turning the gentry into prisons and turning out their family effects into the street. Deputy

Tallien (very kindly) was at the very moment enlarging his repositories of Public Safety. Could anything sound better than a Repository of Public Safety? The very name was a voucher for—thieving. All that came out of those state warehouses went into Deputy Tallien's private pocket. In his department the Constitution allowed him complete control. The right honorable member was a conspicuous patriot. "A humble instrument," said Tallien—but that was only his modesty. Robespierre called him a blusterer. Extraordinary how some men, in spite of taking up a modest position, appear puffed with unwholesome pride. I assure you, after August the tenth, there was really no holding Deputy Tallien. His breezy good-nature was almost suffocating—his ideas bewildering—one or two moderate men, such as Camille Desmoulins, held their credulous breath. No, no, no—he couldn't go to such lengths. There is a limit even in—politics; a limit to liberty, fraternity, equality. The moderates shuddered at the shadow of a rumor. Good-natured Tallien was immensely tickled. (He did hate a slacker.) He would purse his fat lips and look grave. Then he'd speak (and write) very feelingly in very choice language—each word a firebrand in the cause of blessed justice. At that particular moment his partisans consisted entirely of men who stopped at nothing . . . not one of them looked upon bloodshed as evil. . . . "To the pure of heart all things are pure," said Deputy Tallien, raising his large hand and making the sign of the cross. Somewhere, at the back of the crowd, a hysterical woman might whimper. Some women—even among those who stop at nothing—can't control their nerves.

(*Ci-devant* Lieutenant Bonaparte sprang up the pawnbroker's steps, pushed the door open, and strode across the little shop towards a man—probably the proprietor—who was seated behind a crowded counter—the whole place was piled from floor to ceiling with goods—reading a copy of the *People's Friend*.)

He took the little delicately-wrought silver cross, set

with turquoises, which his customer offered him, awkwardly, over the counter.

"Poor stones. We've no call for these articles," he said. "Where does it come from?"

"Corsica."

"Two francs."

The young man trembled in his turn, and turned a fiery red under his sallow skin. The red touched up his eyes until they glowed like lit-up lamps. The effect startled the pawnbroker. He leered at the young man.

"Poor fellow, poor fellow," he said. "And such glorious times, too."

"Grand, *citoyen*."

"I needn't ask, you are one of us."

The young man laughed sarcastically—at his own expense. "As you see, a very tower of strength. I want ten francs."

The pawnbroker waved his hand round his premises. "Look," he grunted. "It isn't business, it's a deluge. That bureau over there, inlaid with real gold mounts—heavy as an elephant—I helped to remove it myself—three francs. They wanted more. Tcha!—beggars can't be choosers."

He took up his paper and shook his head—it wasn't business but infirmity—and chuckled. "Movin' fine," he murmured, "movin' grand."

The young man stamped his foot.

"Listen!"

Lieutenant Bonaparte whipped out a clasp-knife from his pocket and severed a couple of buttons from his faded blue coat. He laid them down very gently on the counter. "They are silver," he said, in a voice melodious as music. His gentleness struck the pawnbroker favorably. He laid down the juicy paper—it really might have been steeped in blood—and he inclined his heart towards charity.

He smiled, disclosing one very long tooth.

"There you are, citizen. For an old friend I'll make it seven francs. Five francs for rent—two for a banquet."

The young man without a word accepted his money and his ticket and clattered out of the dirty little shop.

"There's a cub for you," soliloquized the pawnbroker. "His eyes did it." He was sensibly annoyed over his generosity. He'd paid him as a prince.

Paris labored during those first days of mob rule—it very soon shook off the feeling—under bewilderment and wealth. Money was easy; you stole and you bought; you stole and you sold—in either case the middleman paid—he of aquiline nose, lace ruffles, and haughty contempt. "Ba-ah! ha-a!" I wish we could give you the faintest impression of the populace's scathing joy. They went—the greater part—hungry to bed (a delusion, sirs, merely a delusion), hugging their joy to their delirious hearts and empty stomachs. The majority didn't possess beds, neither food nor beds—but each brute man—according to his brutality—could dream of vengeance—and each she-wolf could—according to her imagination—see herself and her starving little ones bedded in priceless lace and thickest blankets, or eating their fill of hot meat and pastry.

We can imagine Lieutenant Bonaparte's contempt of these ignorant wretches—you don't want to be taught to dislike feeble opposition and ear-splitting howls—he'd followed the people out of idle curiosity (he'd plenty of time on his hands). Once edged in that packed evil-smelling mass—he'd had a good front place—on June the twentieth—he'd seen the king in his palace—mounted on a table—clad in a cap of liberty—red wool, with a tassel to it—negotiating with the rioters. It wasn't a princely sight, but rather a sickening one. It *had* sickened Bonaparte, filling him with consuming rage. At length he had boiled over.

He caught a firm hold of pale Boisgaloup's shoulder. "Ah," he hissed, "look at him!" (he pointed to Louis' well-known features). "What a loathly exhibition! He deserves all he'll get. He's a blockhead! He is a fool! A prompt fusillade would have saved him his dignity and

saved him his crown, and there he sits—inviting the laughter of the world.”

No doubt he was right; he often was.

The second time he had followed the people was on August the tenth, black August, or red August, or heavenly August, whichever you like. A vast deal of difference in opinion in Paris on that date; some rejoiced and some staggered back, aghast. The king ate his supper—boiled beef and vegetable stew—with good appetite, in his provisional three rooms under the roof of his own august Constitutional Parliament. If he'd opened the door a crack he could have heard the House, lusty and loud-voiced, in fiery debate. He didn't.

CHAPTER XXVIII

From THE PRISON OF LA FORCE,
The 1st September, 1792.

TO THE CITOYENNE TÉRÉZIA FONTENAY, NÉE CARRABUS

Yes, my dear Térézia, such is the fate of your old admirer, Ravoral—eating the bread of dependence (and vile at that)—in a National penthouse. Three weeks is not a great scrap of life to a man close on eighty. The days of polite deception are as dead as honor in much-racked France. I would not cultivate a pretense, living as I do in a tomb, so I will quite happily drop my mask of youth with the other pretty insincerities of my former existence.

I would have written before, but paper *chez nous* is at a premium, and lamentably rare in our extremely select circle. Two passages off, behind a stone wall, fourteen feet thick, I have as a neighbor our beautiful and ill-starred Princesse de Lamballe. For no reason at all, except to annoy her majesty, she was removed from the Temple, some time last week, if I remember rightly. Behind prison walls time has but little consequence, and life seen through a prison window appears curiously remote. We have all grown, let us say wiser. Youth and age meet as equals. And every insult, every hardship, every sanguinary rumor we accept without complaint. I have never before cherished the idea of death as a friend. Death, in the full play of existence, is an unsubstantial shadow—here he sports a merry wit, a kindly, fatherly interest. Morning and evening we read our destiny (those who care to look) in the more or less deep-grained scowl or smile, or what you will, which transfigures kind human nature into a veritable fiend. The turnkeys are all as transparent as blocks of ice touched by spring sunshine. Sometimes—very rarely—money will melt their hatred into complicity. If you remember, the Duchesse d'Angrève is passionately fond of gambling and plays for high stakes. At an infinite price she has secured a pack of playing-cards, and is now happily occupied winning

IOU's from her circle of intimates. I am writing by a truly villainous light, at one lop-sided barrel—madame is presiding at another, dealing out her cards with her beautiful gem-laden hands. We keep ourselves as tidy as we can. We know each other by our voices, our gestures, our *bons mots* and our infinite rapacity of ignoring the present. We never talk of the future. As none of us are religious, the subject hardly attracts us.

Now to matters more interesting. How are you yourself? The last I heard of you was a perfectly ridiculous report that poor Devin had engaged your attention. No one has credited the scandal. As I tell them, Madame de Fontenay has too much *savoir vivre* to commit such a solecism. Anyhow, it is an affair which cannot last. I know you, my friend. I love you, I judge you and I find you cold. A heart is the one thing no one can grow from seed. A heart must be born in the full flower of perfection. If I am cruel, forgive me. Love will never cause you discomfort, but no doubt infinite happiness. Happiness is such an exquisitely individual expression. You are the personification of enduring pleasure. I can see you—always supposing you are allowed to live—satisfying yourself for a great many years, treasuring your beauty and directly ministering to the welfare of others. Such as you, Térézia, are of great importance. You represent, if I may say so, the healthy, joy-giving animal, barren only on one point. Which point, you may ask? You cannot suffer. Physically, mentally, you are cased in metal. Such strength! I am in a mood to cavil at death because I shall be debarred from watching your interesting career. Such as you carry men far—or else strangle them. You will be worshiped, but never hated—who hates a perfectly placid idol? Fools, maybe. In your world we will exclude fools, primarily because they will invariably flock around you. I repeat it, my friend—and believe me, I am not without experience—you are born to an enviable lot, if you can keep your lovely head above water.

Honestly, I advise you to let Devin carry you off to England or Spain. The outskirts of Paris are charming in summer, but in autumn the country strikes one as damp and dull and *lifeless*. After all, life is a tremendous possession. Ass that I am, for eighty years I have carried this inestimable gift about my person without realizing its value.

Seriously speaking, I have never utilized my freedom. Convention is the one thing all libertines respect. For instance—the card-party yonder, and the crowd lining the damp walls, elegantly passing the time before dinner in polite conversation (*un plat de jour*, probably soup à la *Révolution*—a very noxious mixture served in wooden bowls with or without pewter spoons), are brilliantly conventional. It is our creed, our god, our genius. There is no genius so great as the art of hiding suffering; no greater test of courage. Why should I complain? I am one of a company destined to attract the admiration of future ages for all time, never their sickly compassion. You dole out compassion to a poor thriftless tear-drenched beggar—one who creates his own miserable atmosphere by his own worthlessness. We pity the poor wretch. We give him of our charity. But who would dare to pity the demoiselles St. Innocents, for example (they are at this moment standing opposite me and laughing deliciously)?—distant cousins of mine—charming little girls, one nineteen, the other eighteen, dressed alike in pink—soiled pink—who cares! They are as fresh as flowers in May—poor pale mites, more than half-starved. (If it were not beneath my dignity, I would love to throw that unspeakable soup in the face of our *maître d'hôtel*!) Térézia, as a last favor I beg of you to try and send us some of your ripe, rich fruit. The greengages at Fontenay are admirable. The grapes of no second-rate quality—and the quantity! (Have I actually refused a bunch because I was too lazy to eat them?) I would like to feed my charming cousins.

They tell us we are going soon to be removed to another prison—any variety is welcome. The ladies are well satisfied. For myself, I consider the news alarming. The ladies, in self-defense, never deign to glance at our wretched warders. I am not so fastidious. I have seen many disgusting sights in my days; but never a more blood-curdling spectacle than Jean Lecou's jutting jaw and retreating forehead, as, with closed eyes, he gives us his little information. No mask! To me his eyes are wide open, revealing untold depths. God spare my cousins! Dear Térézia, as you know, I have always had an unholy affection for youth and beauty. Take this as my last will and testament. Give me a thought now and again—who knows if I am not your master? In truth I am! Beneath my crusty baldness, my countless wrinkles, my arti-

ficial manner, I still carry a heart. A heart—fancy, Térézia, my beautiful pagan—a heart! (You see, I still hark back to the same subject.) A heart is of incalculable importance. Without a heart you lose the key of individuality, you can never unlock the doors of art—never unstop deaf ears. Art is as unteachable as a soul is unprocurable. Yet my faith in you is absolute. You will never meet failure, because you will never understand defeat. How I envy you your machinery, your digestion, your colossal conceit! I am not playing with words or with you. I am speaking in solemn earnest. May you live!

Your sincere lover,

PAUL HONORÉ MARIE DE RAVORAL.

Poor old Ravoral had been dead some three months when Térézia received this characteristic letter. She had heard of the horrors—wept a good many tears, and written at once to her people at Bordeaux. It was about time she looked them up. She would rather like to meet Uncle Galabert again, and see her cousins (to whom until now she had never given a thought). She wrote with dutiful affection to the head of the family—dear papa's only brother, a prosperous and strictly honest tradesman, or merchant, which sounds more distinguished.

It was a miracle that Ravoral's letter ever reached her. Where had it lain between the first of September and the twentieth of November? Three months—less than three months, but, oh, God, what a vast unbridgeable gulf! At night Térézia, even with her lack of imagination, would dream of butchery and terror unspeakable. She would wake and wring her hands and bury her face in her scented pillow, bury it deep in the cool fair linen and try to forget the plight of the people she had known—actually known, taken by the hand, kissed, entertained with all kinds of nonsense. She remembered the ridiculous deportment of Madame d'Angrève and the respect she had always felt for her, though the duchess had not returned the compliment.

The rain beating on her window-panes, the wind sighing

under the discolored elms in her famous garden—all combined to keep her awake. She would fancy she heard stealthy steps in the passage outside; in another moment her door would be forced open . . . entrance demanded in the name of the king . . . no, no, she was crazy! There was no king in France. Robespierre and Marat and all those “creatures” ruled a mob stark, staring mad. Didn’t they howl day and night round the guillotine—the doctor’s Idea transformed to actuality on an appalling scale? In the very centre of Paris they had raised a scaffold, and the knife was grinding to some purpose. It all went by rote. Samson (was not that his name?) had on the whole an easy task. He had only to obey. They had all to obey. Even Térézia—the most beautiful woman in France—would not be exempt from the common order. They called it justice!

She would sit up in bed, her heart beating to suffocation. Her nerves were shattered (so she thought). Had she no friend in the whole wide world? No friend among the ruling class?

In this chaos of thought her quick mind lighted on a tall young man, with great burning, lascivious eyes, who had once upon a time desired her. Térézia was an adept at construing glances. She never deceived herself. Men were all alike, more or less. They all loved her. Love is power. Could she not get speech with this Tallien? She would finish the work the sight of her beauty had commenced. He would save her. Tallien was a noble young man. She had always admired his physical strength, his aplomb, his audacity, his appalling ignorance, so brilliantly veiled. She remembered quite well their first meeting and their second. In the midst of her nightmare she seemed to feel the touch of a dew-laden rose on her lips:—“My first kiss,” only a whisper, but a whisper of lambent fire. . . .

She would fall asleep greatly comforted. The Térézias of this world are very easily consoled.

CHAPTER XXIX

EVEN the most heartless woman may feel a natural twinge of regret at the thought of leaving her home—maybe for ever.

Térédia, leaving Christina working feverishly against time, ran downstairs to get a breath of fresh air. Her mind was all in a turmoil. She was feeling excited, elated at the prospect of an adventure—all the better if dangerous—she was sick to death of doing nothing, sick to death of her own society, her deadly lack of courtship. She would have embraced with fervor the least desirable of her lovers. Had Robespierre appeared behind the laurel hedge—mistily pallid in the moonlight—she would have greeted him without fear. She would have reproved him. She was no coward—she, Térédia!

She stepped out on the desolate terrace. It was a very quiet night. Nature slept, even if turbulent humanity held unholy revel. By a sharp contrast the extensive grounds of the château—the distant grove of elms, the gleaming sheet of water and the long stretch of undulating turf—had a peculiar fascination. The peace of it all for a brief while subjugated Térédia's vanity.

She held out her hands beseechingly, a thoroughly natural gesture. This was the stage of her daily life, the scene of her triumphs, the theatre of her vast ennui. She had spent five years of her precious existence at Fontenay. Her heart went out to the beauty of the night. Her eyes rested on the grave majesty of the famous trees, and lingered awhile on a sheltered seat half hidden in bowering lilac-bushes.

She folded her hands and walked decorously down the garden path. She unlatched the postern gate and made her way along the broad elm avenue. She was not afraid.

No one would molest her. She enjoyed this pilgrimage of love reluctant. Her whole being rose in an inarticulate hymn of farewell. Never again would she touch this exalted mood. She looked up at the giant trees with misty affection. They were old, very old . . . she wondered how old? She stood for a moment leaning against a massive trunk, sunk in a profound reverie.

She was leaving her home for ever. She had entered it as a young bride, joyously confident of the future; her trust had been ruthlessly abused. Leaning against the age-worn tree, her own youth struck her as pathetically real. Would she ever retrieve the confidence of her early days? Out of chaos would she find enduring happiness? . . .

Already a note of self-pity disturbed the idealistic element of her emotion. She brushed her despondency aside, and ran fleet-footed towards the mirrored lake, all bathed in a ripple of moonshine. The tarnished leaves on the great trees shining like burnished jewels, the moss-grown boulders and the reddish bracken—an echo from the wilderness beyond—struck her as infinitely beautiful. It was the “clou” of the park, this unexpected dell of untamed nature. Against the green lawns, silver-gray in the moonlight, and smooth as velvet, the tumbled disorder of natural growth struck a note of grand relief.

Térézia, in an ecstasy of farewell, stooped down to the edge of the lake, and dipped her fingers in the cold clear water. She gathered a chance bramble, gleaming with red berries—to carry back as a memento. “Good-by, dear Fontenay,” she said. “I will always remember you kindly. Térézia is faithful to her friends.”

Except for her whispered, whimsical assurance nothing broke the stillness. It was so quiet that it frightened her. She fancied she saw something move on the opposite shore. She caught hold of her petticoats and ran swiftly, finely, with her magnificent length of limb, her chest expanded, her big eyes wide open. She did not pause for breath until she was safe inside the lighted vestibule.

Devin came out of his room and looked at her.

Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes extraordinarily brilliant, her heaving bosom firm as a rock; her simple dress clung to her figure.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

She put her hand to her lips. "You would never understand," she said. She said it proudly. She was genuinely sorry to say good-by to Fontenay, but *he* was not included. A sudden rancor effaced Térézia's transcendent beauty. She was no longer a goddess upholding the hidden flame of life, but a scowling woman.

He watched her mount the staircase, slowly, heavily. "Why does she run about madly," he thought, "and over-tire herself?"

CHAPTER XXX

SOME three or four days later, if you had been happening to drive into Paris (with your heart in your mouth), you might have passed a dilapidated cart on two high wheels, harnessed to a dejected horse and driven by an old woman.

Beside the old woman, frankly plebeian, with a grim, toil-worn face and capable hands (which seemed to be perpetually pulling at the horse's mouth), sat a well-grown girl. She was very poorly dressed and yet with a certain pretense to neatness. Her head and part of her face were covered by a red cotton handkerchief tied securely under her chin. Her shapely hands were very brown, and what you could see of her face was equally sunburned. Her stiff bodice, fastened by two large bone buttons, revealed folds of dubious linen.

"*Hein!*" roared the old woman. "Get on!" giving a merciless tug to her horse's head as they passed a convoy of soldiers. The old lady evidently meant to clatter into Paris by noon, and also to exhibit to the soldiers the gentle art of driving. She hung on to the reins, whip in hand. Away bolted the long-suffering animal, raising a cloud of dust and nearly overturning the cart.

The soldiers laughed. One of them had caught a glimpse of the girl's face, as the cart swung past him like a flash. He sang out a greeting; she did not hear him, as she clutched wildly at her seat in a vain endeavor to steady the cart.

"Do be careful, Christina."

At the bend of the road Christina slackened speed. The horse came to a standstill with heaving flanks.

"That was a close shave. Did you see him, madame?" said she.

Térédia wiped her forehead with her handkerchief and said that she was horribly frightened and had seen no one except some dirty soldiers.

"In charge of an officer, Captain Longueville."

"Adolf!" cried Térédia, in great excitement, looking back. "Why did you not stop? He is my friend——"

"A pretty pass if you and he had jumped at each other with a kiss and a hug!"

"Do I look very ugly?"

Instead of answering, Christina pulled at the reins and took a sharp turn round. The dejected horse pricked up his ears.

"No," said Térédia firmly. "Drive on to Paris."

"Well, I have warned you."

Térédia, in spite of her annoyance, bestowed a fluttering kiss somewhere in the region of Christina's left ear.

Christina laid her disengaged hand on the knee of her wilful mistress. "Be careful, darling. Don't open your mouth if you can help it. It is a big risk we are taking and I doubt its issue."

Térédia's heart fluttered for all her boasted courage. Paris struck her as an infinitely strange, and rather a terrible place. She stared at the broken monuments, the smashed windows, the defaced houses. The very air seemed tainted.

A great many of the shops were closed and a large number of the people were perambulating the streets, carrying small banners in their hands, or minute gaily-trimmed sticks. They all looked more or less cheerful. In many quarters of the town arose clouds of thick smoke; whoops, shouts, peals of harsh laughter. Térédia shivered. She clasped her stained hands tightly together, feeling very dismayed. She recognized some of her friends' houses, recognized them in spite of their impossible appearance. Could a few weeks of mob rule, or mob vengeance, work such havoc? How forlorn they looked, these

spacious mansions! Through the curtainless and broken windows the Spirit of the Past had spread her wings and vanished—in her wake the bright sunshine of a fine morning.

The sunshine seemed to deride the great empty houses. Where were their owners?

There was something harrowing in this ignoble drive through the city of Paris. No one paid any attention to their modest turn-out. Térézia bent her head lower and pulled her handkerchief well over her face. They were passing the Temple. She did not dare look up, yet behind one of those heavily-barred windows she might have seen her majesty, looking out on a very strange world.

At that moment the boom of cannon rolled away in the distance, followed by ominous silence. The sound came from the Place de Révolution (formerly the Place Louis XV.). It was the signal that the day's work had begun. Térézia dimly recognized its significance.

How could any living person, she thought passionately, enjoy seeing his fellow-creature's head cut off! It was inhuman, it was monstrous!

"To the Cardilacs'," she whispered. She longed to clasp Claire in her arms . . . to assure herself that Claire was safe and well. How astonished she would be at sight of her!

The big gates of the Cardilacs' mansion were wide open. The first thing Térézia noticed in the familiar courtyard was a large bed of autumn dahlias, a bright glow of color against the old house. The flowers seemed to welcome her, to dispel her uneasiness.

The hall door stood open—wide open. Térézia ran up the staircase, calling loudly:

"Claire! Claire!"

She forgot Christina's warning, she forgot her own danger.

At first she did not understand this voiceless answer to her vague question. Her friends had evidently gone, leaving their house in very great disorder. All the rooms were

dismantled. Térézia looked around the big drawing-room with her childish eyes full of amazement. What was the meaning of this desolation?

A hand seemed to clutch her throat. She trembled. Very gently she opened the door leading into the dining-room. "Claire," she breathed softly. "Claire!"

She came upon a human being, at least Térézia supposed she was a human creature. She had never seen anyone like her before.

By the window she sat, this terrible woman. She was very tall, very thin, very upright and hideously ancient. Her discolored skin hung in loose furrows; her deep-set, still piercing eyes were shaded by a few wisps of dead-white hair; her face expressed some remorseless purpose. She was knitting.

"The *citoyenne* comes late. The family have left. I am in charge," she said.

Térézia did not move.

The woman, still knitting, rose, tall, emaciated, smiling—her one sharp tooth projecting over her shriveled lip.

"Who are you, my dear? A friend of the family maybe?"

She spoke to empty walls. Térézia had flown, running for dear life.

To get away, to get away at any price! A torturing sense of terror spurred Térézia to her utmost endeavor. Tallien would help her. Tallien loved her, Tallien was the soul of compassion! He was also a brave young man, and a deputy.

They drove to the House of Assembly.

By sheer good luck, when Térézia had squeezed her way through the evil crowd to a prominent place in the public gallery where, looking down, she had an uninterrupted view of the famous Salle de Manège, Tallien was in the act of addressing the Convention.

She listened, entranced. In her ears his voice was beautiful, impassioned, full of vigor.

He was denouncing the rights of monarchy, urging the house to commit the king to trial and condemn him. He appealed to his fellow legislators—to their intelligence, to their patriotism. He did not veil his purpose—he gloried in it. He shouted in the extremity of his confidence and elation. The determined representatives of France had all to win and nothing to lose—victory lay in their hands! He waved the Prussian invasion aside as a man might toss a handful of wet matches into the fire. God was with them! Never had there been such torrential floods. Argonne was steeped in water, and the enemy's troops were weakened by dysentery, and openly mutinous. The good patriots of France would welcome their foes in a proper manner—a remnant of rebellious and disease-riddled invaders. . . . Again he urged the case of Louis Capet.

A murmur rose in the packed hall.

Camille Desmoulins shifted uneasily in his chair; his ironical glance penetrated Tallien's vanity. Tallien loved the sound of his own voice, he loved his own wide gestures, his own sweeping assertions which fired the heated imagination of the multitude. He was not speaking to the National Convention but to the soul of France, to thirty-five million superbly free individuals—superbly free, thanks to the genius of Tallien!

Behind his words Desmoulins saw the shadow of his gross vanity, his gross birth, his gross cowardice. A brave man never blusters.

Robespierre listened to his colleague, now and again shaking his head, now and again mumbling beneath his breath, and all the time he sucked a straw—when Tallien had finished, it lay limp and flaccid in his hand; he dropped it to the ground. The gesture was significant. So was the glance he directed towards Tallien.

Térézia, against her better judgment, refused to credit her own ears. Tallien was certainly a splendid young

man, very good and reliable. It was she, shaken by all she had gone through, who had not understood the purport of his speech. She leaned forward, smiling. . . .

Tallien never once glanced up at the crowded public gallery. Desmoulins, from his seat in the body of the hall, let his eyes rove the place in idle curiosity. In idle curiosity at his first opportunity he went upstairs, to verify his suspicion. Of course she was a fool—but still he firmly believed Térézia's folly had its due limits. He listened very attentively to Térézia's rather disconnected petition. He said he would do his best to help her, but held out very little hope of any success, and advised her to return with all possible speed to Fontenay. He also promised to inquire as to the whereabouts of the Cardilacs. He would look at lists, old and new. He was very kind, very sarcastic, and, you could see, mortally weary of the whole flagrant business.

"A dignified moderation acts as a healthy wind," he said. "Robespierre is overborne by terrific impulses. It is deplorable and insane."

"Surely you can oppose him? He is a rat."

He shook his head. "When the trouble is over I will arrange matters to your complete satisfaction."

Térézia looked at him closely. "My friend, will nothing make you serious," she asked, "or frightened?"

"What is the good of being frightened? Fear never yet improved a man's valor. With your kind permission, I will remain myself," he said genially.

"You are to be envied in this respect, at least, that you can look on——"

"I look away.—By the way, *citoyenne*, there is a rough fellow here who has been staring at you for the last half-hour—over there."

"Oh!" said Térézia, suddenly remembering her own danger.

She recognized her fat admirer from last year. He had also recognized her. He now placed a finger to his mouth,

and favored her with a significant leer. She felt herself trapped on all sides.

"Take me away," she said, "at once. It is insufferably hot up here." She tapped an individual standing in front of her—"Let me pass, please."

CHAPTER XXXI

THE New Year saw Térézia still at Fontenay, living in three or four rooms. The staff of servants had been much reduced—it was practically impossible to keep servants in those days—their table at times poorly furnished. By contrast, the post-bag was groaningly heavy. What news! The Convention had carried their threat into execution—the incredible had come to pass. The king lay under sentence of death. Térézia, when she heard the news, felt nigh unto fainting. If they murdered the king in cold blood, they would not spare her. They would come and drag her out of her poor “three or four rooms”—drag her out as you would a starved weasel, and wring her neck with absolute indifference. . . .

Life and what happened in life had only for Térézia a relative significance. *L'affaire du roi* spelled *l'affaire Térézia*.

Tragedy is only overwhelming when perfectly simple. The situation was on the whole without any complications. The king had to die. They gave him a few privileges—a father confessor, a farewell interview with his family, and a drive through the streets of Paris. The people were excluded from sight-seeing. Eighty thousand troops lined the streets, eighty thousand automata in this scheme of restitution. Every patriotic heart was filled with sublime emotion.

So he passed through the empty streets, spared some trouble, a king to the last—prisoner of his thirty-five million people, and victim of his own character.

The morning light shone on the scaffold. The incredible deed had taken place. All Europe wailed. And the queen sobbed as if her heart would break. . . .

He was aged thirty-eight years, four months and twenty-eight days.

January 21, 1793.

In this time of stress Deputy Tallien kept up wonderfully. He slept better than he had ever slept in all his life—much, we suppose, as a satiated boa-constrictor slumbers in the hot sun. Every night he went to bed (sometimes he took off his boots, sometimes he didn't) with a good conscience and physically exhausted. As he said, he did not spare himself; as a "humble instrument" he worked prodigiously hard, doing all the dirtiest work of his party. He tried to get out of it—he was more than a little frightened of consequences—but his chief was insistent.

January rushed ahead in a very orgy of glory—they called it glory; an excellent program, headed by the king's execution; item, the massacre of the priests; item, the children's day; item, the marriage of the Loire; item—but why go on? A certain monotony about the whole business.

Now, the September massacres had been a novelty, as no one would deny. For instance, the beautiful *Princesse de Lamballe's* bloody, severed head, thrust on a tall spike for the edification of the queen at an upper window—she had so little amusement—was a thoughtful piece of fun. They say a jailer flung himself between her and the sight, incurring her majesty's displeasure at his rudeness. He had almost laid hands on her—so they said—to get her out of the way; he had sworn at her distinctly and laughed hideously, and she had retreated (proudly) into her corner. . . . It is comforting to know that a demon is not insensible to common decency. We wonder if he got good marks for his gentlemanly act? We like to fancy the Recording Angel amending judgment in the Book of Life—"Strike off two thousand years of purgatory for one Jean Henri, the son of Pichau. . . ."

Like all great men, Deputy Robespierre would rather be the object of a visit than the visitor. However, one

February morning he pocketed his prejudices, and mounted the three pair of steep stone stairs leading to Deputy Tallien's private door. He came early—before seven in the morning—as he wanted to take him by surprise. He had also some information of a private character to give him. In fact, friend Tallien was shortly to be intrusted by a prudent nation with a post of some delicacy and honor—a post where he would be at liberty to act according to his own distinguished discretion. All over France they were instituting these very necessary departments, under the jurisdiction of a supreme court in Paris. The times were such that it was of paramount importance to look after the Public Safety. The seaports especially were to be watched, and, in order to lessen the pressure of executions in the capital, the guilty could be arraigned locally, tried, and (if found guilty) guillotined at the discretion of the said governors in their own towns or districts—a scheme which would save everyone a great deal of inconvenience, and the loss of much valuable time.

Hundreds of times Deputy Robespierre had impressed on his supporters the necessity of quick work. It maddened him, he said, to see this lack of briskness. As a result of this desultory behavior and slack attention to duty many enemies of the country had made good their escape, and were now safe in England or elsewhere, plotting in their own nefarious interests. The French Ambassador, M. Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, *ancien* bishop, *ancien* deputy, had been obliged, rather precipitately, to ask for his passports. Being a wise man, he had traveled to America, provisionally discarding both spiritual and temporal rank in favor of life. They said he earned a living by setting up a small retail shop and conducting it profitably. He had quite a genius, M. de Talleyrand, for serving his own ends. We are sure, even if his pork wasn't often first grade, that he got a prime price for it, and that he wrapped up each separate piece very elegantly, giving the lucky purchaser a distinguished smile for nothing.

Deputy Tallien was up and dressed, looking rather puffy and red in the face. He had been up all night at the Jacobin Club—the life and soul of the meeting. After he had addressed the influential gathering some of the members had entertained him at a splendid supper, where there was very little food and much wine. Tallien was a poor drinker. Two bottles quite did for him. He would then dangle against his chair, like a doll stuffed unevenly with sawdust, and speak very freely, to the intense gratification of his many opponents.

Seeing Deputy Robespierre, Deputy Tallien suddenly recalled some of his remarks after supper. He had spoken in disparaging terms of his beloved chief. What *hadn't* he called him? . . . he was quite embarrassed.

"Take a seat," he said hospitably, pulling a chair forward. "As you see, I have been busy—kept to the traces."

He waved his hand impartially round his little overcrowded room, indicating his untidy desk and a notable collection of miniatures. He had lately gone in for miniatures. He admired, so he said, beautiful women, refined and beautiful women; it was a study of absorbing interest.

Robespierre sat down, very carefully put his shiny yellow hat on a convenient table, and placed his walking-stick between his knees; he sat crunched forward, his knees in and his feet out—contemplatively sucking the head of his cane and looking at the head of Tallien.

"A fine morning," said Tallien, breezily. "It was a pity you weren't at the club last night—a really moving address from Hébert——"

"I'm sorry to pain you, my dear fellow, but heads are heads."

Tallien was still standing. His smile had grown very large.

"What an extraordinary coincidence! It was just exactly what he said."

"Exactly." (Suck, suck.)

"All alike."

"All alike."

Robespierre thumped his stick viciously on the floor (rat-tat-tat!). "What do you mean by trifling with duty, citizen?"

"I?"

Tallien's wide open mouth was as round as a red gutta-percha ball. "I?" he repeated, dumfounded.

"Precisely. You are sheltering the Fontenays. I know it as a fact. She was down on a list. A list, sir, of my own hand. You've dared to scratch off her name. I'm not a fool—whatever you are. I'm not a lover—whatever you are." At every word his voice got lower and lower—intensely audible. His meaning was unmistakable. He dropped his cane with a clatter. Tallien jumped forward and picked it up—it was quite an unconscious movement—probably hereditary.

"What have you got to say for yourself?"

"She can wait, she can always wait," murmured Tallien. Then he swore, not angrily, but in mild amusement. "How you jump at conclusions! I don't know the lady. Met her twice in my life. Twice—twice, two little moments. Ask the rose. The rose speaks truth. The rose——"

Robespierre snarled. He had no stomach for such idiocies. He wanted the woman for his own purpose—to spite Tallien. . . . Tallien wanted her for his purpose. . . .

"Ha, ha!" sniggered Robespierre. "We can wait, we can always wait. Joking apart, the Carrabus correspondence——"

"Foolish, incriminating, awful!"

"Mark my word——"

"It isn't fair, Robespierre, it isn't fair." Tallien swept his hand across his eyes. "Use a bell too hardly and it'll crack. How I've swung in your interests! How I have labored on the thorny path of duty! Have I ever thought of myself? Never! And I never will. I'd rather die than be selfish."

"Stuff and nonsense! Where are they?"

"How should I know?"

"Arrest the woman to-day."

"If she is in Paris——"

"She is in Paris."

"That's all right. Perfectly all right."

Robespierre took up his hat. "That's true," he said, smiling (always a hideous performance). "Here we are very nearly disputing over nothing. I have something of real importance to tell you. Not now, dear friend, I haven't time. We'll see each other at the House. Come into my committee-room, at twelve o'clock. You'll be pleased. It is a splendid idea."

"Thank you, *citoyen*. I am most deeply grateful. As a humble——"

However, the sentence was lost on his patron. Very nimbly the great man took himself away, chuckling down the stairs.

He had no sooner got away before Tallien flung himself before his writing-table and scrawled a note.

"I can't wait, I can't wait," he murmured.

Neither could the Fontenays. Thanks to an anonymous communication they received that morning, they hastened their departure to Bordeaux. In fact, they set off that very evening, and were handed their passports—as arranged—by an unknown individual at the eastern toll-gate.

CHAPTER XXXII

TÉRÉZIA sat at her dressing-table, considering her nails. They were rather blunt, but beautifully polished—on the whole, she felt satisfied with their appearance.

She had lately moved into new rooms, very far from meeting the requirements of her station, but much more to her satisfaction than the proffered hospitality of her uncle and his “odious” wife.

From the very first moment Térézia had shrunk from this paragon of a female, who regarded beauty as a crime, and a forlorn position as the outcome of some personal ineptitude. Citoyenne Louise Carrabus was a virtuous woman, and looked upon Citoyenne Térézia Fontenay as a frail specimen of her sex. She had heard stories—even in Bordeaux—of her loose living. She pitied Devin, and told him frankly that, though she abhorred divorce in the abstract, she considered it in his case a merciful institution.

Térézia had to endure her aunt’s views, her aunt’s coldness, her aunt’s advice, until she wanted to shriek, and catch at her aunt’s plastered peruke and tear it into shreds.

Mortal dulness met her in Bordeaux from the very outset. Mortal dulness had a privileged home at her uncle’s house; in fact mortal dulness occupied every nook and corner of that roomy establishment on the quay, where the tall windows faced the shipping and a glimpse of the sea beyond.

It was a quiet town in the spring of 1793. The doves on the market-place cooed contentedly. A few lucky

would-be emigrants managed to get a foothold on the planks of outgoing vessels. Those not so lucky were hustled into the local prisons to await trial. There was a Committee of Public Safety in Paris, with thousands of branches stretching all over France. Presently a rumor arrived in the busy commercial town of Bordeaux, the rumor stayed, it grew to definite news—and as it were from all the corners of the earth the winds rose and belowered. . . . The Terror was on them! Bordeaux would taste of aristocratic blood! Bordeaux would see with her own eyes the deadly working of that wonderful instrument of justice, the guillotine. . . . Red caps waved ecstatically in the air. Lily heads drooped disconsolately. In the hideous prisons arose a sound which might have been derision, or a murmur of thankfulness. . . .

The captains on all outgoing ships were hard pressed for accommodation.

Who was coming to their good town “to preserve order”?

No doubt they would send a capable man.

Térédia was on the eve of dissolving her marriage with shock-headed Devin—he on the eve of procuring a passage to Martinique. Térédia intended, pending her future arrangements, to stay on quietly at Bordeaux, under the protection of her kinsfolk (her two brothers lived in the town). She was to have the custody of the little Georges.

Térédia accepted every clause in her divorce. Nothing mattered. Life was stagnant.

No doubt she did her best to mitigate the barrenness of her existence. No doubt love flourished in her little apartment. Even at Bordeaux she had many admirers and a few ardent lovers. Some of these gentlemen, on their way to foreign parts, believed in her overpowering goodness. She was an angel, they said,—this beautiful, charitable woman with a sad history. (An unfortunate marriage invariably bestows on a woman a pathetic importance.) Now that Devin was out of her life as completely as if he had never been in it, Térédia said she missed him. She

deliberately took up the position of the neglected wife before her sympathetic audiences.

Térédia in her wild search for excitement did not mind involving herself in dangerous affairs. She was known to assist refugees, known to distribute unauthorized passports. She was more than "suspected"—she was regarded as a notorious busybody who had no right to cumber the earth. The great majority of the women of Bordeaux condemned her outright. Why didn't those in authority send her packing?—this colossally important young person with her excessively short morals. There were scandals about her to right and left. Her aunt held up her bony hands in mute protestation—mute because there are some subjects no self-respecting woman will mention.

Térédia didn't mind. She enjoyed her notoriety. She courted danger. She made friends with seafaring captains. She collected funds for the needy. Secretly she opened a bureau for "Public Safety," and she flourished as the proverbial bay-tree.

Terror was creeping down the white roads of France, creeping forward in the person of a very notable gentleman—none other than the Dictator's right-hand man, his dearly-beloved Tallien. Tallien could be trusted to do his duty. Tallien had gone through the right sort of experience. The sight of a headless trunk no longer gave him a qualm, but keen satisfaction. A whole-hearted patriot he, and a splendid business man. He had grown very rich. He knew how to harness larceny and usury to his own profit. One thousand per cent. was his commission for a small job. He was arrogant and puffed with pride. His long lank body heralded immense deeds. . . . The winds grew in volume around old Bordeaux; the whole town quivered. . . .

Yet Tallien wasn't a happy man. Greed is one thing, passion another. He had satisfied his greed, but his passion had never met an equal response. He spat at the memory of his early conquests—immature adventures of enormous

'dulness and equal ease. He wanted to live—he, Tallien; he wanted to be a hero to himself and a hero to his woman! His big eyes roved Paris—blood, nothing but blood. He was getting a bit sick of signing death-warrants, a bit wearied of this continual performance, which lacked novelty. He wanted a big adventure. He was burning to let loose his very soul at the feet of a perfect woman. He saw her in his dreams, tall, voluptuous, well-bred, white-skinned, golden-haired with rich red lips and a genius for love; . . . She was a past mistress in the art which has given woman her unique position. Tallien wanted to be tamed, to be led by a “silken thread,” to be worshiped and to worship at his divinity’s shrine. . . .

With pomp and state our lackey—now the all-conquering Governor—made his entrance into hapless Bordeaux. He arrived in the midst of a street broil. Some of the inhabitants were in the chase of a fugitive woman—she tall, elegant, with flashing eyes and heaving bosom . . . they were on her, scowling, howling . . . quite a picturesque scene. At the critical moment she saw her deliverance. Forcing herself free of the crowd, she ran right into the arms of the all-powerful man.

He caught her and held her tenderly. Her sweet breath fanned his cheek—her red mouth all a-quiver, all humid, all beseeching. He looked into her eyes, dim with inexpressible emotion. The menacing populace had less than no significance. They two were alone, held by a magic spell. . . . Tallien leaned over Térézia. “You are safe, *citoyenne*,” he said dully.

His heart had never beaten so convulsively. “Where do you live?” he asked her.

She tried to speak, but words failed her.

Tallien glanced at the hushed crowd—thinning rapidly. He shuddered at the possible turn of events if he had not appeared in time. He was horrified at the thought of an innocent woman being torn to pieces by a set of ignorant, blasphemous wolves. They were no better than animals.

Gently he passed his hand over Térézia's disheveled head. The touch of her hair electrified him. She was very beautiful. He noticed her left arm was bleeding, just below the elbow. He sucked the wound. She was very pale, very quiet, very respectful.

"Come," he said authoritatively, "I will take you home. *Citoyenne*, I am here to protect you"—he bent close to her ear—"to love you. Do you understand? I never forget a face. Your face has lived with me day and night. I always redeem my promises."

"You have never given me a promise," she said. She lifted her eyes and looked at him proudly.

"Not in so many words," he said gravely.

She felt his arm tremble around her waist. She could have laughed, under normal circumstances. She knew the symptoms so well! Her heart beat to suffocation, her mind a whirl of doubt—of splendid hope. Had she turned a very ugly corner?

"I don't care about my own life," she said modestly, "except that it may be in some small degree of consequence to others. The *citoyen* Tallien knows that duty and love are ever hand in hand?"

"Duty and love," he echoed slowly. "They are at war, *citoyenne*."

She looked down. "If so, I wonder which will conquer in your case," she said, softly.

"Need you ask?"

She was silent.

Leaning on his arm, they walked forward. At the door of her house she paused. She held out her hand. "Good-by, and thank you for my life," she said.

He looked at her without comprehension. A tinge of color had returned to her face; her eyes were very bright.

"Do you live here?"

"Yes."

"Where is your husband?"

"I have no husband."

He shrugged his shoulders. "For the matter of that, it is of no consequence," he said brutally.

"No."

"Is he dead?"

Térédia smiled. "I have divorced him. Citoyen Fontenay has probably by now arrived at St. Pierre. Does it interest you, *citoyen*?"

"Everything about you interests me."

"You are very kind."

"*Citoyenne*, I am a brute at heart; a brute wants to be satisfied."

She liked his address. It was uncouth, unconventional—admiration, akin to madness, lit his black eyes.

She had been feeling sadly unnerved after her imminent peril; now she felt safe.

The tears gathered in her eyes. "I have been in great danger, *citoyen*," she said. "If you hadn't come at that moment and taken care of me——" She left her sentence unfinished. It was quite intelligible enough.

He looked quickly up and down the street. No one was in sight. He caught her up bodily in his strong arms and mounted the stairs. She clung to him, abandoning herself completely to his mercy. She handed him her latch-key, and he pushed open the door and carried her into her sitting-room.

By the window stood a writing-table massed with books and papers; a silk-shaded lamp; a bowl of spring flowers. A broad couch was drawn up by the chimney angle. The walls were covered with brightly-tinted paper on a cream ground. There were two or three easy-chairs in the room—a gay rug or two on the polished floor. On a pretty little work-table in mahogany, with a green fluted silk-box, stood the miniature portrait of a little boy, in a gilt frame; a home-like, charming apartment, full of refined atmosphere. The sun flooded the room.

Tallien laid Térédia gently on the sofa.

"Darling," he murmured, "I have loved you since the beginning. Térédia, my beautiful Térédia, the gods work

for those whom they honor. This is our hour." He bent over her and kissed her forehead.

"You are the most wonderful woman in the world," he said.

He knelt down beside her and chafed her cold hands. "I believe in destiny," he said. "This had to be. You are mine now and forever."

She never looked at him, but she was acutely conscious of his presence.

He kissed her hands, her white neck, a little blue vein on her temple. He buried his face in her fragrant hair, and all the time he was thinking furiously. . . . "This is *my* woman! I love her! I adore her! I will renounce my public career. I will live for her! I will devote every hour of my existence to making her happy. She shall return my love a hundredfold. . . ." He said nothing. His mute worship bathed Térézia's whole being in the essence of content. She had no desire to move . . . he continued to kiss her with the ardor of passion and the gentleness of love. . . . "He would treat her well. He would be her humble slave." His fingers followed the lines of her voluptuous figure. . . . She was a wonder, a miracle, a glory! . . .

In an ecstasy of joy his lips met hers—wholly sweet, wholly submissive.

Suddenly she raised herself and wound her arms around his neck. They rocked together, bound by one desire.

It was getting late, yet Tallien could not make up his mind to go. He stood staring at Térézia with unsatisfied hunger, tongue-tied by the very excess of his happiness. He was frightened lest she should escape him. Without realizing it he was jealous of her friends, her occupations, her very thoughts. He wanted her entirely for himself.

Citoyenne Carrabus was standing by the mirror, arranging her hair. With a rough gesture he caught hold of her plait—unloosed it and wound it round her throat.

"I could strangle you," he murmured rapturously. "And then die at your feet, beloved."

He looked at her with dim eyes. At that moment he would willingly have suffered death for her. He opened wide his arms and crushed her to his heart. "I love you more than life," he said, "more than self, more than ambition. I'm as wax in your hands, darling. There is nothing I wouldn't do for you, nothing I wouldn't grant you."

She laid her head on his shoulder. "As a lover you are not backward," she said.

He kissed her tenderly, respectfully, almost reluctantly. "All I ask from you in return is a kind word."

She looked up at him, and put her fingers on his eyelids. "Trust me, darling," she murmured.

"I am strong as a lion."

"I know it."

"As my wife, Térézia, you will be famous."

"As your wife?" The idea was new to her and not without its attraction. As his wife she would surely go far? Always supposing this hot-headed young man didn't trip. It was just as easy to fall as to rise in these days. For a minute she considered his chances . . . they'd do. In this world you must always risk something.

"I will marry you," she said slowly, "later on. We've got to be careful, dear; there is your position to think of."

He laughed to scorn her scruples, intoxicated by his success. "Together we'll govern the world," he flared. "My darling, you need never regret your trust in me. All I have is yours."

She thanked him kindly. Very gently she unwound her hair and gathered it in a firm knot at the back of her head. She looked like a child, meek, solemn, full of calm happiness. . . . She believed in herself, even if she doubted Tallien. . . . In whatever sphere Providence placed her she'd always be able to shine. She smiled.

"Don't boast," she said gently.

He laughed harshly. "There is light ahead," he said.

He pointed to a gleam in the darkening sky.

Térédia went swiftly across to the window and lowered the blind.

He flung himself down in a chair and buried his head in his hands; in them he held her little lace-edged, perfumed handkerchief. He drew a deep breath. "There is nothing in this world of any significance except yourself," he said.

"Yes," she agreed.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ROBESPIERRE allowed himself the relaxation of novel-reading. He liked to flutter through a volume, glean the plot, laugh or sigh as the case might be. At times the Dictator wanted to forget the present reality. The whirling pace hardly suited his liver.

He had long ago made his calculations—clever enough up to a certain point, but beyond that the ravings of a madman. For one thing, he dismissed God from his universe; the working of the doctor's invention had clearly biased his mind—he accepted no authority but the narrow basis of his own system, which engulfed all France. Every living man was open to suspicion; every gutter-snipe reeked of aristocratic blood.

As we have said, there were no limits to his butchery, no bounds to his ambition. He saw himself—in a sky-blue coat—ruling heaven and earth, surrounded by obedient tools, mannikins of flesh-and-blood . . . he saw a whole battalion move at the “click” of one tongue (for the nonce parched and fever-coated).

He turned the pages of his book listlessly and started scratching his neck—more blotchy than ever. Through his velvet coat he felt the deadly sweat ooze from his attenuated body. The fever was sapping his strength, destroying his nerves. . . .

“Who goes there?” he snapped.

He watched the ample folds of a curtain suddenly bulge and flap out. The door behind it was locked, the key safe in his pocket. He took seemly precaution against any attempts on his life. Who had dared to disturb his privacy?

Another Corday, maybe? Another buxom young wo-

man with a mission to fulfill? He dismissed the idea and the danger. Marat had been a palsied, loose-lived fool. Robespierre prided himself on his continency. He had not driveled away his strength in mighty orgies. Bah! he despised women-folk and the lore men loved! Love? What had love to do with his magnificence? The Incorruptible One smiled—chalk-white in the face, his sweating body damp as a wringing sheet.

The wind had played him a trick—a sudden gust had forced the carelessly-hinged window open and the draught had caught the heavy curtain opposite. The mild April air blew into the smoke-riddled privacy of the most responsible villain in France.

Robespierre shut up his book and limped across to the window. The street was very empty. The days of commotion and lively pageants had died a natural death. The king, the queen, the court were wiped off the face of the earth, even as the flowers of yester-year. (Robespierre thought in poetry.) Many of the wicked gone—and a few innocent men. . . .

“The pity of it!” he said aloud.

Over the death of these unwitting angels Robespierre had shed hot tears. -

“Brothers in heaven,” he had implored, “forgive the mistakes committed in the name of Justice.” No doubt this stinging insult of assumed brotherhood with the martyrs fell on deaf ears. At the throne of God these good men and just remained impassive, as the recording angels meekly kneeling in some dim church—fashioned, they, of marble and the nimble brain of artistry.

As luck would have it, Robespierre spied a traveling carriage jogging down the evil street; it was dusty and heavy and cumbersome. The leather hood was brazenly flung back. All the world—had the world so minded—could have seen the happy smile of *ci-devant* Fontenay, Térézia Carrabus—by all that was marvelous!

Robespierre’s face took on a curious expression as he recognized the lady. He closed the window carefully and

returned to his seat to consider his immediate course of action. Here was a feather to pluck and fling in the face of outraged modesty! He had heard of Tallien's masterful wooing and tyrannical rule at Bordeaux. The young man was copying his own methods too closely to be tolerated. It was high time he was put in his proper place. Instinctively Robespierre stroked his blotchy throat. After all, the remedy was very simple. The lady should herself—indirectly—administer the healing draught. Tallien had clearly behaved as an arrogant devil and deserved his punishment.

Robespierre, summoning all his dramatic energies, plotted a scene of low comedy, or, if you will, high tragedy. Tallien, recalled to Paris, should have the pleasant task of denouncing his mistress (a preliminary step). It would give him (Robespierre) true pleasure to aid and abet his purpose. Robespierre had never failed to hate Tallien. If they were in love, so much the better. Love—love! In that little dirty parlor there rang out a cracked laugh, and the mightiest scoundrel in France cut a clumsy caper, game leg and all.

CHAPTER XXXIV

TÉRÉZIA, washed and beautified, was lying on her couch, drawn up in front of a cheerful wood fire, fervently admiring the slender proportions of her ankles.

Her flesh-tinted silk stockings were very fine, and matched to a nicety her new boudoir gown in the same shade of rose satin. There were frills of real Mechlin round her bare throat, and in her elbow-sleeves. Her little shoes were embroidered with apple-blossoms. If you remember, it was the month of April.

The *salon* was lofty and light, creditably clean and very well furnished. Young Guéry had found her the rooms—he was really wonderfully clever and such a dear boy. . . . Térézia arched her foot. She might tire of her lovers, but she never tired of herself.

The firelight played on the lovely *citoyenne's* be-creamed and be-powdered face, flattering—if possible—the rakish glory of her short-cropped curls.

Térézia's great plait had been cut off. Thereby hangs a tale—a tale of love and greed and insensate passion; of how she tamed the Lion, and the Lion had first suffered all the tortures of jealousy and then the pent-up misery of remorse. To prove her virtue Térézia had calmly reached for the scissors and sacrificed her hair. The action had dumfounded Tallien (as it was meant to do). Meek as a lamb, he had kissed her feet, blubbering of his wickedness, and coiled round his throat the rich symbol of her innocence.

Only then—with Tallien wearing her beloved plait—did Térézia realize her folly. She fled to the mirror and fell a-weeping. This was sacrilege! This was horror! This was irrevocable!

In spite of her cropped locks and her deluge of promises, she had remained faithful just as long as it suited her. Every time Tallien felt doubtful of Térézia's virtue, he would thrust his hand deep into his capacious pocket and squeeze something soft and perfumed. He carried her plait on his person as a charm against infidelity. Sometimes that soft coil of hair seemed to plunge as if in mirth.

Bordeaux and what happened in Bordeaux belonged to the past. Térézia had an extraordinary facility in adjusting her perspective. To some women there is an impassable line between yesterday and to-day. Yesterday was of no importance to Térézia.

Yet she was content, lying on her comfortable couch waiting for her supper-guest (Guéry was rather late in returning), to review the past six months of her life. On the whole she was quite pleased with herself. Little women, it is not all of us who can successfully hoodwink a roaring lion!

Térézia smiled to herself as she recalled one or two occasions when her wit and audacity had saved the situation. On the whole, she had always proved herself Tallien's equal—in fact, his superior. Not that he was stupid; he was seldom taken at a disadvantage, and where money was concerned he was never at fault. Térézia loved the means of wealth, yet at times she had urged Tallien to generosity. So bountiful was his exchequer (she said) that he could well afford an occasional act of clemency and sometimes send to the guillotine an unplucked bird.

On execution days he was extremely patriotic and completely disinterested. From the tribunal of justice, his voice would ring loud and effective. "Brothers!" he would cry, "he must die. In regenerated France——"

He would stalk up and down the platform erected immediately opposite the guillotine—large hands gesticulating, juicy lips jutting, bold eyes glittering—duly impressing the illiterate, yet, for all his trumpeting, a prey to nervous indecision—a born coward, he.

On one occasion, carried away by his conflicting emotions and madly desirous of impressing the fickle crowd, he had sprung off the revolutionary tribune and mounted the gory throne of La Guillotine—a stone's throw away. Picking up a head from the executioner's basket, still warm and faintly colored, he held it at arm's length, waving it in the air, and shouting bestial triumph. Then, smoothing back the clotted tresses, he had put his beefy lips to the cold mask of death, and deliberately, slowly, unctuously, kissed the rigid mouth. It was a small woman's mouth, proud and young.

The rabble had swayed to catch a nearer view of this moving exhibition and had shouted in sympathy. One or two dissentient voices:—"Enough, enough, you beast," they cried.

Tallien had daintily dropped the head back into the packed basket. He had looked at his blood-stained fingers, at his wet coat. They bled profusely, these aristocrats—he had turned suddenly very pale, his nostrils quivered, his full mouth hung loose as a withered leaf. He had steadied himself on the railings.

"Can you doubt my patriotism, true brothers of one mind?" His words leaked thin as a spent whistle.

The touch of those lukewarm lips had unnerved him. Nasty, hateful business!

He had descended the platform, dully conscious of some irreparable misfortune. Through his sodden mind ran copious lists and the pressure of overwork. Nasty, hateful business! . . . He had glanced behind him at the dirty knife—no time for fripperies and cleanliness—with an oath he had sworn he would make holiday to-morrow and sever himself completely from his public duties. His mind had turned with rapture at the thought of Térézia, divinely complacent, divinely compassionate, divinely woman. . . .

The lion, full of these engaging fancies, had swung himself free of the crowd and had gone to call on Citoyenne Carrabus.

He had found her improperly engaged, and had swiftly ejected the young man from the premises. She was *his*, body and soul! A terrible scene had ensued. Térézia remembered quite well how frightened she had been and how—here she smiled—how everything had ended in her triumphant victory.

Tallien needed Térézia, he needed her smooth words, her wonderful softness, her caresses, the light of her beautiful eyes, the warmth of her womanhood. She had soothed him, she had comforted him, she had brought music into his life. How he loved her—this matchless woman who lived to lie and lied to live!

Térézia played with the soft knot of ribbon at her bosom and dispassionately reviewed her connection with Tallien. Of course she had deceived him, but she had always managed him beautifully. And indeed, truth to tell, she had every intention of legalizing their union by marriage.

She liked a firm footing in society, and had always deplored unconventionality in others. At her first opportunity she would woo respectability.

Térézia yawned and looked impatiently at the pretty little timepiece ornamenting the chimneypiece. How miserable was all this fighting in Paris! She was heartily sick of the revolution and desired nothing better than a speedy restoration of order and a king in the palace again. What she wanted was a system of effulgent monarchy where a woman of parts could distinguish herself.

She laughed aloud when she remembered Tallien's cunning expression, when one day she had bared her principles to him. He hadn't agreed with her. Why should he hate nice people? (said Térézia). What did he see in the dirty masses to admire? She had called him a simpleton and then kissed him.

Yes, she had always been able to manage her refractory, big, roaring lion. On the whole she was rather proud of him. Anyhow, he was the man of the moment, and head and shoulders above the rabble. His one fault was jeal-

ousy. It required all her engaging frankness to turn the tide of his suspicions.

"How could she deny herself to her friends?" she would say sweetly. "Was not her beauty apparent to all?"

Some such remark would be followed by a sigh and a deliberate kiss. The jury of one found her not guilty. At this she would smile, wind herself closely round his slack body and forbid him to speak. She remembered how he had begged her to accompany him for a few days' holiday in the mountains. He had looked ill and harassed at the time, and T  r  zia had not hesitated to comply immediately with his request.

So they had gone picnicking in the woods—only those two—gay as irresponsible children. T  r  zia had wanted to bring her little Georges to complete the family party, but Tallien had shown himself adverse to her motherly solicitude. He disliked the boys' bright manner and his devotion to T  r  zia. He was jealous even of her son. T  r  zia bore his unkindness to Georges with admirable patience. She seldom saw the boy. He still lived with his uncle and aunt under Christina's careful charge. He would have been in her way at Bordeaux. Besides, "the darling" was safer at his great-uncle's house, where he had a larger nursery than she could have afforded him. T  r  zia would tell her friends that a mother must sacrifice her own feelings where her child's happiness was concerned. She had given up everything for Georges' sake—even her dear old maid. She missed Christina immensely—so she said. In reality she was glad to be rid of her "unwarrantable interference." Old servants (she thought) were a terrible nuisance.

Well, as we have said, Tallien and T  r  zia had their outing. They climbed up a steep mountain path, and, under the shadow of an immense cliff, they looked down on the world.

They lodged in an ancient and forsaken cottage and played at simplicity to an accompaniment of champagne, dainty food and feather beds. T  r  zia had ordered these

necessities to be sent up to the empty cottage, as a surprise to Tallien and a satisfaction to herself.

She was always ready for a new experience, and, as the weather was heavenly, they spent their first evening on the moonlit terrace very happily engaged.

Térédia had dressed herself, after cottage fashion, in a simple blue cottage gown, and wore her splendid hair in a shining knot at her neck. It was before the great scene where shears played a drastic part.

Tallien's performance in the part of the rustic lover lacked all distinction. Tallien always remained himself, foxy, vain, grasping. At least he had made the most of his hour; when he fell asleep the full August moon had wandered home, and Térédia lay, as some handsome, healthy animal, sunk in profound repose, her long limbs luxuriously stretched beneath a coverlet of stitched silk and eiderdown. No doubt the little forsaken cottage had stared amazed at its strange occupants.

Térédia remembered how, on the whole, she had disliked this senseless excursion into the unreal. The second morning broke misty and cold. She had woken in a peevish temper. She had wanted her coffee, her bath and a thousand unobtainable necessities.

Roused by Térédia, Tallien had lit the fire and boiled the coffee, but he failed to improve his lady's humor. The day had ended in a lover's quarrel; the descent was rapid. Once in her own comfortable apartment at Bordeaux, Térédia was not only pleased to smile, but even to lavish her thanks on her sorrowful lover. She had enjoyed herself immensely, she said. (An excursion is never so lovely as when viewed in the retrospect.) In fact, they had never agreed so well as on the evening of their return to civilization. They were as two perfectly tuned viols—voices, thoughts, gestures of one subtle harmony. Térédia remembered how she had enjoyed her carefully-served dinner, the shaded lamplight, her pretty dress, her lavish perfume, the day's news and rumors from Paris. Tallien

had looked quite distinguished in black velvet and silver buttons. . . .

Térédia sighed and broke off her musings to look at the door. Why was Guéry so late? What had happened? Had Tallien sent her to Paris for some nefarious purpose? She dismissed the idea as preposterous. She remembered his genuine fears for her safety, how he had urged her return, and how, to pacify his uneasiness, she had meekly submitted to his plans. His fears had touched her lightly. . . . Tallien's enormous feet would always secure her a safe passage through difficult places.

Even a flight can be managed agreeably. She had not mentioned on parting from the strangely subdued lion that she had offered a seat in her commodious traveling carriage to young Guéry. She had managed the departure from Bordeaux very cleverly. Térédia loved an intrigue. If Tallien had, as it were, handed her youthful admirer into her carriage with all due recognition of his usefulness on the journey, she would have lost every shred of interest in his companionship.

As it was, she had been, all the wearisome roadway, sensibly gay, sweet and lovable.

After Tallien's crude love-making—at times rough as the hug of a bear—the young man's restrained and exquisite sentiments pleased her. Dear boy, instinctively he raised the level of true love to very high art. Is not sincerity the key of expression?

She had borne the journey admirably. She was quite content to sun herself in the cult of Young Love and Deep Respect—even though in her heart of hearts she thought poorly of Deep Respect. Deep respect and love were to her strange associates.

The whole journey had been wonderfully bracing and divinely new. Only once had the young man forgotten himself so far as to give her a chaste and breathless salute. Térédia had never known a sweeter kiss.

She had drawn herself up proudly in the jolting, dusty carriage, and very gently she had asked him to remember

what was due to her. Tears had gathered in her eyes as she spoke—the tears of a lovely, defenceless woman, sure prey of evil man.

The youth had blushed hotly. The blood had sung in his ears. He had sworn to himself never again to hurt her sweet susceptibilities. . . .

On the fourth day they arrived in Paris, and long before then had promised each other eternal friendship.

Only two hours ago Térézia had dismissed the handsome boy, with an invitation to supper.

“Go,” she had said, “and make yourself presentable, *mon cœur*, and above all bring me back a sheaf of news. I am dying to know what they are saying in Paris. Am I forgotten?” She had clutched at his tapering fingers. “Have we put ourselves in danger?” she breathed. “*Mon cœur*, promise me not to leave me alone to-night.”

Promise! Why, the young fool had not expected such supreme permission.

His eager words tripped each other. He said he would guard her and adore her all the days of his life. He called her rapturous names—his beautiful princess, his divine angel, his white rose. He assured her he was totally unworthy to serve her.

Térézia had sighed, looking a little *distracte* as her eyes wandered over her new quarters.

She could hear her new maid, Clarisse, a pert young woman, slamming the drawers in her dressing-room. She shivered. In some ways she missed grim old Christina, with her big, staring eyes and firmly shut mouth. In some ways she had been useful. . . . A mother’s heart is capable of great sacrifices.

Young Guéry had been informed of her unselfish devotion and had, of course, responded in a suitable manner. He had said her behavior was worthy of a Roman matron, and that she was a heroine.

The dear boy was rather given to superlatives of speech. He meant very well indeed.

How difficult it had been to move him, for instance, this

afternoon, from the borderland of rosy romance and get him to grapple with facts. She had had eventually to push him out of the room.

"The sooner you go the sooner you will return," she had said very sensibly. "I will count the minutes, darling."

He had kissed her hand gustily and bolted down the echoing stairway, waving his hat in the air, full of boyish assurance.

He had been gone three hours when T  r  zia heard his timid knock on the sitting-room door.

She was angry with him for being so late, so she closed her eyes and lay very still on the sofa.

"Come in," she said faintly.

He opened the door very gently and advanced on the tips of his toes across the parquet floor.

He looked down at T  r  zia and whispered, "You are resting?"

"No, waiting."

"For me!" His voice rose two octaves.

Still she did not open her eyes. "For news?"

He was disappointed, so he said nothing, but dashed his buckled hat, which he carried under his arm, upon a chair and, kneeling down by her couch, he took her hand out and gently kissed each finger separately. Then turning the palm outwards he pressed his lips passionately to her soft flesh. T  r  zia smiled and handed him her other hand. He repeated the performance.

"Foolish boy," she said, and vouchsafed him a glance.

Then she stroked his shining hair. "When I arrive at a decision," she said, "I never change my mind."

"In that respect we are exactly alike."

"Are we, you naughty boy?"

"How I love you!" he murmured.

"Get up," she said. "This isn't the time for folly."

"Folly!—is it folly to be happy?"

She extricated herself from his encircling arms, and sat up very straight, looking extremely fresh and self-assured.

"I can trust you, *mon cœur*," she said. "How nice you look! Sit down on that chair and tell me everything."

She had to whip him with eager questions to get any sense out of his story. It was a lame report. What was he hiding? Evidently they had not (as she had fondly hoped) sickened of bloodshed in Paris.

Térédia, as soon as she had realized this alarming fact, stamped her foot on the ground and cried out:

"I don't believe a word of it! Terror is dead in Paris. A fashion always lingers longer in the provinces. You don't know what you are speaking of. Who told you?"

"Robespierre."

For the space of a minute she said nothing.

"He—he himself?" she stuttered.

She rose to her feet and flung her arms round the young man's neck.

"*Mon cœur*," she moaned, "they won't rest till they have killed me."

CHAPTER XXXV

FOR the moment Térézia was really frightened. She clung convulsively to the pale young man. She held up her lips and mutely implored a kiss. There was nothing repulsive in her action. A child might have done the same in need of pity, in need of sympathy. For the moment Térézia—shameless coquette that she was—was sexless. She did not regard Guéry in the light of an emotional young man who would very probably misconstrue the touch of her moist lips.

He kissed her and trembled out of sheer physical delight; she kissed him and trembled out of sheer physical terror. How could he tell the nicety of difference? Do we not always seek in others the reflection of ourselves?

Térézia was frightened of death—of a fate worse than death.

In a flash she saw before her the loathsome prison dungeons at Bordeaux—their squalor, their darkness; she seemed to breathe the putrid atmosphere, to feel her way in the congested crowd—to catch sight, by the light of a flickering torch, of a pale, worn face, fever-ridden, terror-haunted—her own face! She saw herself one of that hopeless company, caught in the toils of devilish wickedness. She had realized the futility of Tallien's boasted protection. He was quite capable of denouncing her himself. He would sacrifice her to save his own miserable carcass. Why had she believed in him? Why had she trusted him? Why had she treated him so royally?

The room rocked around her and suddenly grew dark.

"Save me!" she moaned, hardly knowing what she said. What could the boy do but hold her still closer? She remembered Tallien's fierce jealousy, and she felt inclined to hate Guéry.

She let go her hold on his shoulder. She sank back on the couch and feverishly searched for her handkerchief. It had slipped away among the laces of her bodice.

He watched the flush on her white forehead, the beat of a pulse in the splendid column of her throat—a tiny tendril of amber hair falling on her neck. She was beautiful.

“I will save you,” he said, confidently.

She looked up at him and wiped her eyes.

“I must not behave as a fool,” she said. “Why don’t you scold me? A hard beating would settle my nerves.”

Térézia, as she spoke, smiled at the suggestion. He looked so elegant, so tender, so young, so utterly incapable of giving anyone a beating, least of all herself.

She made a place for him on the sofa. “Sit down,” she said, “and tell me every little thing.”

“Are you feeling better?” he asked as a preliminary.

“Oh, yes, yes,” she said, petulantly. “Go on with your story.”

“On leaving you I went to my rooms. I had hardly finished dressing before a letter was brought to me by a stranger, an old man of quiet and respectable appearance.”

“Yes?” (Who cared if he was respectable or not! Was there ever such an irritating fool?)

“The letter—just two lines—was from Maximilien Robespierre.”

“What did he say?”

“I was to give myself the honor of calling on him without a moment’s delay in the interest of a certain lady.”

“The villain!”

“I dashed on my hat and, immediately, accompanied by the messenger, set out to have the matter explained. I can tell you I was in a fine fit of rage. I gathered that your arrival in Paris had been notified at headquarters. Robespierre—Lie down, sweetheart. This is a most unfortunate business.”

Térézia felt nigh to screaming.

"How did he find us out? Tell me, how did he find us out?"

"Perhaps Tallien——"

"Tallien! He is my friend, my very devoted friend. He loves me." She covered her face with her hands and trembled.

The young man breathed heavily. He bent over her and roughly took hold of her hands. "Madame, you have concealed the truth," he said, his eyes burning with anger.

"Poor precious idiot! Can you hide a mountain with this bit of lace?" She tossed her handkerchief in the air. He let it fall at her feet. "Take it—it is wet with my tears. Of course Tallien loves Térézia." She spoke with slow voluptuousness. "Cannot you see that is our one hope of safety? I have him under my heel. He would do anything for me. He is every bit as big a scoundrel as Robespierre," she added, reflectively. "We'll set them at each other."

"Robespierre is an angel of pity compared to Tallien. With what delight would I plunge my dagger in his false heart! Don't believe in your lover, madame."

His lips quivered. He tried to speak with fine disinterestedness, but his voice vibrated with pain and righteous indignation.

She had as much as admitted her guilt. . . . Tallien loved Térézia. . . . The consequence was that Térézia, in spite of her repeated assertions to the contrary, loved Tallien. Was ever youth beset by a worse tangle? She was deeply involved. Her natural purity stood accused. She had sacrificed herself in the interests of mankind. It flashed upon him that there was an ulterior and sublime motive for her behavior. Bordeaux had rung with her praises. Had she not tenfold deserved her title, "Our Lady of Compassion"? Who can sound the depths of a noble woman's heart? She must have suffered all the agonies of hell. And here was he ready to upbraid her, to scorn her, to cast her out of his life as unworthy.

Térézia studied the conflicting misery on the boy's

mobile face. She dimly realized his thoughts. She was angry with him. She hated his high-flown notions of Deep Love and Deep Respect. They had floundered in a quagmire, let them sink!

His very youthful prettiness filled her with distaste. His blonde and silky hair, his smooth chin, his red lips, his white teeth, his ridiculous baby eyes, blue as forget-me-nots. In truth he was a simpleton, a coxcomb, and a menace to her personal safety.

Young Guéry, in a spasm of agony, bit his lips and turned his face from Térézia's blinkless stare.

Her thoughts leaped ahead to the near future. Her anger turned to acute self-pity. The hatefulness of her position struck her with the force of a stinging blow.

Her face melted into extraordinary tenderness.

"*Mon cœur*," she cried, hardly above a whisper, "you shall help me to bear my suffering. I can trust you. Your love is the only consolation I have. I wonder how it feels, the touch of that cold, sharp knife! I am not a coward at heart. I am going to be very brave. I won't cry when my time comes . . . a moment's numbing suspense . . . and then glory."

She sat very quiet, the ghost of a smile on her beautiful face.

"Look at me, my friend. You see I am prepared for the worst and quite calm."

"Térézia!"

"Do you believe in God and all His angels? Did you love your mother?"

"You must not, Térézia. . . ."

She had succeeded in thawing him.

His heart beat to suffocation. Standing close beside her, he looked down at her with a world of contrition and tender affection in his forget-me-not-blue eyes. His divinity was a woman in need of protection. His youth folded her closely as in a mantle. He felt himself a man, for all his poor seventeen years—a man full grown and strong.

She sat motionless.

"You are the best woman in all the world!" he declared stoutly, by sheer force of will reinstating his lady in her former glory. He flung Tallien's huge bulk, as it were, in the mud. He didn't count! He, Guéry, would treat him with the contempt he deserved. By the Lord's grace, he would! It was as clear as the blessed sunlight that, she, Térézia, had never cared for him. Never! Never!

He repeated his superlative assurance over and over again with triumphant conviction, as he watched her half-fearful, half-defiant helplessness.

She broke off the thread of his reflection by remarking, "Whether or not Tallien plays me false, Robespierre will never incline his heart to mercy. I am in a sorry plight, darling boy. Tell me, how did he broach the subject?"

"He questioned me——"

"Such an easy task," she murmured.

"I was extremely careful."

"Yes?"

"By some evil chance he knew of your arrival."

"A chance?"

"As luck would have it he was actually at the window of his office when we drove down the Rue de St. Honoré. He sent you his kind regards and hoped you were comfortable."

"You gave him my address?"

"No need. He had it already. How do those people find out things?"

Térézia nodded. "And what else?"

"He said he would give himself the pleasure of calling on you at his first opportunity—probably to-morrow. He said you were a very attractive lady, but hardly prudent enough, at that he smiled and asked after Tallien's health."

Térézia's eyes flashed. "Guéry, I am looking forward to a struggle sharp and lively. If the worst comes to the worst this will serve me."

She rose and fetched a little satin-wood box lined with

blue velvet. "Look! is it not a darling? I bought it in Bordeaux for a mere song, and a woman's whim."

She showed him a little toy dagger, cunningly chiseled with a twisted gold handle. The handle was tied with a pink silk bow, tasseled with gold.

She toyed with it and pressed its smooth surface across her cheek. Then she replaced it in its box and returned to her seat by the fire.

She smoothed her draperies and sat as immovable as the world of nature before the storm breaks. The firelight caught the diamond buckle on her pale slippered foot, and it shone with a thousand iridescent reflections.

The young man mechanically replaced a log which, in its fall, had not disturbed Térézia. He kicked it into place, throwing on at the same time a fresh one from the carved wood box. The flames burst into triumph and raced up the wide chimney.

Outside, the patter of rain fell on the cobbled yard. From very far off the rumble of a passing coach broke the quiet of the night. They two seemed shut in upon themselves.

"Térézia,"——he began.

She looked up at him, a faint smile hovering round her closely-set lips. He was not capable of listening to reason. He was giddy and sick with love . . . truly life had given him joy.

"Do you know how old I am?" she asked inconsequently.

"You are very young."

"I am twenty, just twenty. As years go I am not actually old, but I have had good value for my life." She stretched her arms lovingly to the blaze. "How I adore warmth and comfort! Yes, *mon cœur*, supposing the worst comes to the worst, the waste places in my life have been negligible."

He looked at her with dawning comprehension.

His words trembled with a passion of regret.

"My poor darling," he said. "Life has treated you very badly." He threw his head back and clutched the hilt of his rapier.

She sighed. "I am only speaking the truth," she said. "It is vile."

"Silly boy! Some people wait all their lives for love and only achieve dulness. My face is my very good friend." She spoke gratefully.

He came round and knelt at her knees amid the shattered ruin—of Love's young dream. He had no right to judge her. Her present position was frightful. Did she realize the horror which engulfed her? It flashed upon him that, in spite of everything, he adored her.

She bent down and rubbed her smooth cheek against his. "Dear boy!" she said.

She said it with genuine kindness. She felt old enough to be his mother, in spite of his seventeen years.

"So you are jealous of Térézia's past? As if the dead years mattered! They are dead, my dear, dust and ashes. We live for to-day and we think of to-morrow. I was married to a brute."

"*Si, si.*"

"Your hair is like silk," she said, kissing his forehead.

Her tender voice blotted out the sight of Tallien's gigantic greed. Poor girl!

Térézia was in an expansive mood. She looked into the dancing firelight with her big soft eyes full of wounded astonishment.

"I will tell you the truth," she said. "I am vain, grasping, cruel, abominably selfish. If I loved you I'd turn you out into the cold street. I am indifferent to everything which does not give me pleasure."

He tightened his hold on her hand.

"Térézia!"

"I have trapped you, young Guéry, trapped you by my beauty, my mystery, my wantonness." She gave him a sudden push. "Well, listen, *mon cœur*. I am not wholly bad—as God lives, I am not wholly bad!"

She jumped to her feet, her eyes flashing.

For one moment they faced each other.

"Good night," she said. "Go home and dream of a maligned woman transformed into a winged angel. . . . Guéry, Guéry, I want to live!"

She broke down and wept, covering her face with her hands.

"The pity of life!" she breathed. "For what purpose are we born into this sad world, where all is confusion and wickedness?"

"Térédia!"

"Go!" she said. "Go! Can't you see I am already regretting my generosity?"

He laughed aloud.

"With your very kind permission I am going to have some supper. I am very hungry."

She dried her eyes. "You can stay to supper if you promise to leave me the moment we have finished."

He kissed her hand, and said he would give the matter his serious consideration. "It is a very wet night," he added.

"You obstinate wretch!" smiled Térédia. "Ring the bell, will you?"

When Clarisse appeared, looking sulky and hot, Térédia told her to light all the candles in the chandelier and to replenish the fire.

"Is supper ready?"

"Yes, *citoyenne*."

"That's nice. Come along, *mon cœur*, and we'll see what the unknown cook has provided. Make up the fire, Clarisse, and don't forget to warm my bed. I have been shivering all the evening. I wonder if the rooms have been properly aired."

"They are like ice cellars," said Clarisse. "Where is the young gentleman to sleep?" She played with her apron and looked supercilious.

"I'll tell you later," said Térédia coldly, as, followed by Guéry, she passed into the dining-room.

It was a small cheerful room with white paneled walls and crimson-curtained windows. On the walls hung several family portraits.

"What a pretty room!" exclaimed Térézia. "By the way, whose house is it? Hot soup, chicken, jelly and lovely fruit! Aren't we lucky?"

She sat down at the head of the little round table daintily set out with china and silver. There were four massive silver candlesticks on the table, each with its lighted candle.

"Whose house is it?" she repeated. "The silver is splendid, and look at this china dish—it is certainly worth a lot of money. I know that woman." She glanced at the portrait opposite her. "Guéry, you shan't have any soup if you don't answer!"

"Let me give you some wine, darling."

Térézia pushed aside her glass. "Answer me. Whose house is it?"

"Nobody's at present. Belonged to a friend of mine. I happened to know the woman left in charge. She has been for years in the service of the St. Innocents——"

"The St. Innocents!"

Térézia glanced round the room with great staring eyes.

"The young people, you know. Jacques, some five or six years ago, married his cousin, Mademoiselle de Longueville; they were as happy as the day was long. Full of pranks. They really behaved as babies, though they were awfully proud of their own baby—a fat little creature with the family nose——"

"They are guillotined, you mean?"

The boy nodded.

"When did it happen?"

"In November."

Térézia stared at the portrait facing her. It represented a handsome, elderly woman in a *décolleté* dress with a knot of crimson ribbon at her bust. She wore a

lace head-dress on her high coiffure. Her eyes were dark and sparkling.

Guéry, with an unsteady hand, poured the soup into two large cups. His hand shook so that a few drops were spilled on the damask cloth. Térézia did not notice his clumsiness. She was still staring at the portrait of her old enemy. It was a life-like portrait of Jacques' dignified mother.

"His mother and his sisters had a much worse fate. They were victims of the September massacres. Also the old people, I believe. The whole family has been exterminated."

"Darling," he said, "don't think of horrors to-night. You are tired after the journey and worried about yourself."

She laughed hysterically. "You'll die a judge,—a famous criminal judge," she said.

She poured herself out a glass of wine, broke off a piece of bread and dipped it into the wine. The first mouthful choked her. She burst into tears.

"I can't bear it! I can't bear it!" she sobbed. "It is too horrible for words. Why did you bring me here? You are a fool. The St. Innocents never liked me—they would just *hate* me staying here." She pointed to the portrait. "Lizette's mother is looking at me now as much as to say, 'Never mind, it will be your turn next. I never flinched. Behave, if you can, like a lady.' I can hear her cold voice. I can see her haughty, indifferent glance. She always treated me as dirt beneath her feet. If ever there was a pompous, dull old creature it was Madame St. Innocent. She was full of prejudices, full of silly little maxims. . . ." Térézia broke off suddenly. "One must not speak against the dead," she said solemnly.

"Darling——"

"I mustn't cry. Forgive me." She gave him a melancholy smile. "After all, I'm not so dreadfully greedy, am I? All I want is to live, and, yes, a little happiness."

The boy's eyes welled with loving sympathy. He felt ready to go through unmentionable torture to save her an unnecessary sigh.

In the charged atmosphere each sound was magnified tenfold. Clarisse, slamming her dishes in the pantry close by and singing over her work, was intolerably audible.

"Drink your soup, darling. It'll be quite cold."

She pushed her soup listlessly aside.

"I'm not hungry."

He got up and uncovered a silver dish keeping hot over a spirit-lamp.

"You must eat some chicken."

"I can't eat anything."

He placed before her a wing of the fowl with nice potato straws and creamed *champignons*.

"For my sake, Térézia, be a good girl. You must keep up your strength."

She played with her food. "It is rather nice," she said, "but you can't expect me to have an appetite, I'm too nervous. The least little thing would make me scream. And yet I don't seem to have any feeling at all. Everything is unreal to-night, you and I and Paris—great big wicked Paris—this horrible little room—everything except memory."

"Yes," he said. "Yes."

He ate tremendously fast, surreptitiously watching Térézia, who swallowed infinitesimal morsels of chicken and copious draughts of wine.

She sighed at intervals, but her spirits were improving. She had—unconsciously—eaten all her food and—unconsciously—it hadn't choked her.

He kept up a desultory conversation with great earnestness. "I'm not going to leave you to-night," he said.

She nodded.

"You must go early to bed."

She was quite amenable. He would shift for himself in the sitting-room. By Jove, he'd sleep like a top anywhere . . . he'd choose a book when left alone. If sleep

was out of the question he'd read by the firelight. He rather looked forward to his sorrowful vigil. Morning would bring him counsel. He was determined to save her life, even at the expense of his own. He and the cook between them would smuggle her out of danger . . . one day she'd remember and thank him. She would remember him. What glory! His loving thought leaped years ahead to the noble tranquillity of Térézia's happy old age, when they were rudely interrupted by a peal at the hall bell, accompanied by rattling blows on the door.

"There," said Térézia, in her calmest manner. "I told you so."

Young Guéry sprang to his feet.

"Sit down," she commanded. "There's no hurry. Let them knock."

Clarisse came hurrying into the room, talking volubly. It seemed there was a crowd of people waiting below, in the courtyard. She had had nothing to do with it, nothing! They were carrying on terribly; howling. It was pouring with rain. Such a night! a night of horror! She must go and answer the bell. What was the good of resistance? No one resisted in Paris without suffering. In justice to herself——

Térézia held up her hand—a pretty little hand covered with sparkling rings. It quite amused her to see young Guéry's pained expression—he took his love very seriously, also his responsibility. What had *he* to do with it? It was fate—and Tallien. Her beautiful eyes narrowed dangerously. At that moment she felt nothing but contempt for her lion—a beastly mangy lion.

She got up, tall and straight, with something rather grand about her attitude. There was not a shadow of terror in her calm voice.

"Go into the kitchen," she said to the trembling maid. "Monsieur Guéry will open the door." She used the word "monsieur" intentionally. She would have clapped it out—at that moment—in the face of the sea-green god himself. She was justly angry, Térézia. She hated—at that

moment—all men, including Guéry. What a trembling fool he looked! What was he nervous about? . . . The St. Innocents, every one of them, had faced a far worse fate without flinching. The old lady—spiteful old cat!—hadn't believed in her courage. (She'd never forgive her.) She, Térézia, was quite equal to her duty.

Clarisse fled howling away. Térézia walked up to young Guéry and tapped him smartly on his shoulder.

"If they want me, I'm in the *salon*."

"Térézia!"

"Be a man, darling. It is rather thrilling, you know. I do hope they'll give me time to change my dress."

While he was talking outside, in the tiny hall—it was quite a small flat of three rooms—Térézia kept smiling to herself. Poor dear boy, of course he would say the wrong thing. Men generally do . . . stupid creatures! What was the good of talking?

With languid grace Térézia walked across to the sitting-room. All the candles were lit as if for a party, and the fire was burning brightly. What a reception! Who were they? Rough men? She heard two voices, and Guéry's eager, angry expostulation.

"He talks too much," thought Térézia regretfully. "Far too much."

She leaned her right elbow on the mantelpiece and studied her face in the mirror. Her hair was growing beautifully—so thick, and such a good color . . . in a year or two it would probably reach her waist.

She laughed gently. She felt sorry for her pretty golden hair. What a shame! . . .

CHAPTER XXXVI

AT this exciting moment—we hope that you are feeling as concerned for Térézia's golden curls as she does herself, they were neatly knotted at the base of her throat by a filigree gold clasp, which Tallien had given her (Bah! there's something revolting in the fact—from what dead woman had he plucked it?)—we are obliged, in the interests of the story, to introduce a new character. His was one of the voices Térézia had heard outside the door, and in spite of his rude words he struck her as worth listening to. She had actually left off admiring herself in Madame St. Innocent's charming mirror, and came across the pretty room—quite charmingly pretty in the firelight and candle-light—to listen by the door, the better to hear what he was saying.

The owner of the other voice merely annoyed her. He spoke in a bawling, loud, drunken key—deep and gruff at that, like a cavern full of smoke and belching fire. She knew that voice. It was the voice of the people. She had heard it often at Bordeaux. She had hoped that it had ceased to exist in Paris.

The gruff voice bawled on its top note, the interesting voice insisted, young Guéry's stream of words was truly amazing. The lady stamped her foot.

When young M. Guéry came in, his face was flushed, his address one wild preamble which presently elucidated itself into the disagreeable fact that Térézia must consider herself (temporarily) under the protection of the Bureau of Public Safety. Robespierre had sent a couple of picked men to take care of her.

“Send them away at once,” she said.

Young Guéry, with a shrug of his shoulders and frantic

gestures, informed her the men would not budge. They intended to remain all night on the premises. God knows he was willing to help her; his dagger was at her disposal. Young Guéry looked over his shoulder at an imaginary pool of blood, his own, spilled in the ardor of fight and for the glory of love.

Térézia pooh-poohed his vision, dismissing it as she would have dismissed the insistence of little Georges, eager for a fairy story when his darling mamma was otherwise preoccupied. Little Georges would have had a smack somewhere or other on his diminutive person. Young Guéry, thanks to his superior inches, had to be treated in another fashion. She was sick to death of him.

Térézia, in her turn, standing under the lighted chandelier, regardless of guttering wax—there was a devil's draught somewhere—shrugged her splendid shoulders, and, not deigning the youth a glance, she passed outside. He heard her presently, in her clear, self-possessed, truly agreeable voice, ask the citizens to give themselves the trouble of entering the salon, where she would be entirely at their disposal.

Guéry rushed into speech.

"Darling," he babbled through the doorway, "they aren't fit to speak to you. They are either drunk or mad—probably both. Their language is outrageous. Their demands are gross! . . . Darling! Darling!" In feverish anxiety he caught at the tail of her delicate train, whisking softly through the half-closed door. He had a wild idea of holding on to the shimmering stuff and by brutal violence enforcing her retreat.

He did not know his lady. Térézia, if realizing his attempt, was quite capable of leaving him the undisputed possession of her dress. She would have enjoyed slipping out of her gown and imagining his tongue-tied surprise at his booty. When is woman coerced by brutal force? You can lead her by love, you can guide her by gentleness, you can keep her by wit, but when you come to blows, it is like beating a cloud—waste, sheer waste of strength.

Presently she returned majestically into the cheerful sitting-room, followed by her two warders. One was he of the interesting voice, but at the present moment not much to look at—a red-skinned, red-haired, ugly fellow, and in very slovenly dress. Yet his clothes were clean enough. In fact this M. Joseph was surprisingly clean for a jailer from Les Carmes—the dirtiest prison in Paris. His companion was a gigantic, red-eyed, thick-lipped fellow with a mass of fair tousled hair thatching his flattened skull. His greasy coat, straining over his broad thighs and broader shoulders, gaped open on a dirty tricolor tie and a waistcoat of canary-yellow satin. He had a trick of holding on to his coat with a pair of enormous fists with mutilated finger-nails ingrained with all manner of dirt.

Guéry stared with unconcealed hatred at “the scoundrel” as he entered the room busily engaged in munching a huge crust of bread and cheese. It was the finishing touch to his offensiveness.

The young man offered Térézia a seat, at the same time warning the men to keep their proper distance.

“Oh, darling,” he said, “you are not treating them as they deserve. Why speak to such wretches? Let me——”

“I like to,” said Térézia, gazing pensively into the fire. “Who can escape the finger of destiny?”

Her calmness dumfounded Guéry. What had destiny to do with damnable insolence?

The giant smiled, eying the chandelier and the lady with impartial flattery.

“Supper is never so cheap as when you get it free,” he mumbled between two great mouthfuls. “Say what you will, Joseph, we are in luck’s way. She might have been forty, toothless, vixenish, a hell of a trouble—kicking, screaming and no grace about the business; cold rooms, no fires, no candles, no wine”—(a wink through the open door of the dining-room at the inviting supper-table). “A patriot must do his duty and take his pleasures as they come.” He sighed. “I tell you Joseph, my man”—a

heavy slap on his colleague's back—"we have struck oil. She is a dear, and as pretty as the tulips in my mother's garden when the sun slants over the fields. By Lucifer, Joseph, say your prayers and keep your eyes on the young gentleman. I'll take care of the lady. What is your name, precious? It will be precious to me if it's Sarah or Araminta or plain Mary."

"You are very drunk," said Térézia.

"No, *citoyenne*, I assure you you haven't an idea how I look when I am *very* drunk. Joseph will explain. Joseph drinks only cow's milk. Gin upsets his digestion for weeks. He had a taste just now—a most unfortunate mistake. He is naturally a jolly good fellow. Here, Joseph, speak up! Tune up the tune you sang on Michaelmas Eve which drove all the geese into the cauldron, spluttering and squirting until they simmered in rich thick gravy. You spoon'd it, son! You spoon'd it! No lies! The lady won't stand lies. Out on you, fellow; show your tongue even if you can't use it. He has a bashful soul, as beautiful as your floor, my darling. I could dance and eat and admire from now to Doomsday. It is damnable close to Doomsday. Darling, are you there?—poor, pretty dear, a shame to cut off its little head! I'd save it with pleasure for a kiss, only Joseph would be sure to find his tongue and give me away. Or he'd write. He is great on writing. His writing would astonish you, my good sir"—with a grave bow to Guéry.

"Hist," said Joseph, pulling his confrère's straining jacket. "Be sensible."

"Fool! How can sense keep pace with the times?"

Térézia laughed. Mr. Giant smacked his lips and pointed his sandwich at Guéry. "Be young, sir, be yourself, sir, be a happy boy, sir, and not a poor copy of a stone image. There now, the lady is leaning her head against his hand. Kneel at her feet, look up at her face—a miracle of whiteness—what the aristocrats waste in soap would keep us in cheese for a month. My friend

here, who is a handy artist and uncommon quick at his pencil, will sketch the group for love and a louis."

"It is intolerable," muttered Guéry, shivering under this direct attack.

Térédia smiled again. "It is rather amusing. I wonder if the little man is also drunk. Here, ask the giant's name."

"Chatterbox, at your service," replied the big man, at once. "I change my name to suit my argument. When I am dismal I am Mr. Dignity. When betwixt and between, I am nothing." He swallowed the last crumbs of his supper and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, blowing Térédia a kiss at the same time. "Sorry, Joseph, my friend, it is all gone. Only my words left. You are kindly welcome to them. I never eat my own words, for fear of indigestion. A good digestion invites dreamless slumber."

He glanced around the room, selected a rug, rolled it up into a bundle and lay down on the floor with his head on the improvised pillow. "I thank you, ma'am. Take care of Joseph. He is a dear little creature." He gave a pull to his coat. "A middling blanket," he said. He kicked his enormous legs in the air and flung off his muddy jack-boots. They fell with a thud on the centre of the floor. The chandelier trembled—a faint tinkle of shivering crystal drops. The little ormolu clock chimed eleven musical strokes. A squall of wind rattled the tall windows, accompanied by the patter of steady rain.

Clarisse—very much subdued—crept out of her pantry and into the dining-room, and began removing the dishes from the supper-table.

Joseph glanced at his companion sprawling on the floor, feigning sleep or fast asleep. Giving the giant a wide berth, he sauntered across the room and studied a picture hanging on the wall—a charming model of youth, by Watteau. Then he turned to Térédia. "What a dainty touch he had," he said, softly.

A spluttering snore answered him from the floor. The

giant turned over, lay flat on his back, hunching his feet under his knees, red hands clasped on broad chest. His thick gray socks were full of holes.

Térédia, from the depths of her arm-chair, without looking at Joseph, remarked that she wondered Robespierre kept such ragged creatures in his service. "Surely the pay attached to the guardians of Public Safety ought to attract a superior class of men?" she said.

"There is only one class, *citoyenne*," answered the smaller man, bending over the fire and warming his hands.

Térédia laughed derisively. "God forgive your boasting!" she cried. "As if France was only peopled by drunkards and vagabonds!" she glanced again at the man on the floor, shuddering. "Bah! What a spectacle! Is he always drunk?"

"Not always. He is pleasanter drunk."

"We are fortunate."

"Very fortunate."

She turned suddenly and looked at the man.

"What made you come to this?" she asked.

"One thing and another. The course of our lives is seldom shaped by a single circumstance."

"Poor man . . . sit down."

"Thank you, *citoyenne*, with your permission I prefer to stand."

"I'm your prisoner," sighed Térédia.

Joseph looked at young Guéry, leaning gloomily against a mahogany pole-screen set with a piece of tapestry worked in glowing colors—probably the *chef d'œuvre* of Madame St. Innocent's happy moments.

By mechanically raising and sinking the little panel, young Guéry was doing his bounden best to break the screen. Poor boy, his fingers were itching for employment.

"Leave that alone!" said Térédia sharply.

"Darling——"

Darling frowned and turned her back on *mon cœur*. "Break it if it pleases you," she said indifferently.

Joseph swept the hearth; he did it very neatly. Térézia looked at him curiously. His profile was astonishingly fine. He had good features, and, yes, he wore a wig!

Looking up, he met the lady's curious glance. His eyes were luminously clear—beautiful gray eyes, almond-shaped with dark lashes. He might have been thirty or thereabouts. His eyes (at that moment) gave you the impression of integrity and a welter of deep thoughts, principally of a grave and scholarly nature.

The giant's labored breathing seemed to fill the little room to its uttermost.

"Poor creature! Probably you have seen better days," she remarked.

Her kind words made Joseph blink.

"Madam," he whispered, "I am here to help you."

In her astonishment she half rose from her seat. Guéry let go the screen and touched his rapier. A candle guttered in its socket.

At that moment the giant, with his eyes closed, his legs outstretched, his fists clasped across his mighty chest, started very adroitly to roll himself sideways across the parquet floor. He evaded his boots with a nicety of calculation.

He did not stop rolling until his tousled head lay within a yard of the lady's chair, well within the circle of the leaping firelight.

"Go to sleep, Mr. Dignity," he said, very solemnly. "Go to sleep and keep your ears open. Joseph is always worth listening to. . . . She's a pet . . . the warmth of the fire is delicious. . . . Go to sleep, Mr. Dignity, and sleep long. It is one of your distressing habits to wake up sober."

Joseph touched his companion with his foot.

"You are a clumsy brute," he said.

"Not a patch on you, my friend. . . . Keep her amused."

Térézia accepted defeat with her habitual good humor.

She turned to Guéry, as much as to say, "I knew he was only trying to deceive us."

She twisted her chair a fraction of an inch further away from the drunkard, and settled herself comfortably.

She closed her eyes, with a weary expression on her face. Guéry regarded her apprehensively.

"Dearest," he implored, "you are looking very tired. Please go to bed."

Térédia shook her head, without looking up.

Guéry sighed (wise boy), said no more, and retired into the shell of his miserable reflections, varied enough, but all sad.

The rain hurled itself in gusty squalls against the tall French windows. A volume of smoke came pouring down the chimney, as the result of a mighty gust of wind. The candles flickered.

Térédia smoothed her silk dress, and drew in her exquisitely-slippered feet under her voluminous petticoats. She did not want her new shoes spoiled. She glanced pensively at the charming clock standing on the marble mantelpiece. She decided that she would sit up at least two hours longer before retiring to rest. Probably she would succeed in tiring out her warders, and her poor, faithful love-sick Guéry. . . . What big eyes he had! What had *he* seen of life?

Her situation was not without piquancy. Virtually she was the prisoner of two ill-matched men. She was sure that Joseph had seen better days, but the man on the floor was merely beastly.

Joseph had shown considerable tact in immediately dropping his offer of help. No doubt the hulking brute at her feet would, eventually, under the combined effects of wine and the genial warmth of the room, fall asleep. . . .

Térédia pointedly addressed Joseph.

"*Citoyen*," she said gently, "be so good as to replenish the fire. I am cold."

Guéry gave her a poignant and melancholy glance. Guéry had been ruminating on her extraordinary courage,

in precarious situations—and yet he couldn't quite approve of her sang-froid. Joseph was undoubtedly only a degree removed in beastliness from "Mr. Dignity"—the unutterable swine! . . .

Citoyen Joseph, after he had built up a crackling blaze, drew forward a modest stool, covered in green silk tapestry, and, having obtained Térézia's permission, he seated himself.

"What surprises me," he said, "is not the change in Paris, but the want of curiosity in the town. I assure you there are many quarters quite untouched by tears and bloodshed, where united families, happily engaged, pay no attention to ugly stories which they are wholly unable to credit."

"Have you come across such people?"

"Indeed I have, madam. There is a dear old lady living at this moment in the Rue de Lille who believes in the existence of monarchy, and who mildly censures her late majesty for playing the dairy-maid, though she thoroughly approves of her domesticity. She is loyalty itself to King Louis XVI., though sometimes I have seen her shake her head at his good-nature. Congenial occupation, madam, blinds many of us to the harshness of life. My mother loves her children, honors her king, and never asks questions of either."

"It sounds incredible," said Guéry.

"Why shouldn't it be true?" said Térézia.

Joseph bowed, and stroked his cheek with a well-shaped hand.

"If so," said Guéry, "you must be an accomplished liar, sir."

Joseph continued stroking his cheek. "Of some little merit, sir. I never gossip when at home. Also, I have very little opportunity for practice. Robespierre keeps us all pretty busy. Citizen, life is interesting, and romance is charming."

"Very," said Guéry, in a cynical tone. "Do you keep your good mother shut up?"

"On the contrary, she is as free as air. She chats with her neighbors, and every Saturday, accompanied by her servant, she goes to the Marché St. Honoré and does her weekly marketing. She brings home a basketful of provisions and a few crumbs of news——"

"Why, sir," said Térézia, "that is really extraordinary. How does she account for the news?"

"Madam, I take it God protects His chosen few. On entering her little house she scatters the crumbs to the four winds of heaven. Then, very happily, she sets about her household duties, which are manifold. I can recommend her walnut cordial as an excellent drink. She spins flax, soft as silk, and she mends her own linen. She never ceases to thank Providence for her lavender-bush, her one big tree, and her own patch of blue sky. At the present moment my mother is the happiest woman in Paris."

"Poor lady," said Guéry, with a dreary smile at the ceiling. "How does she account for her son?"

"I thank you, citizen, kindly. By the way, she has two, and she is proud of them both. I myself am a prosperous man—the wicked flourish as the bay-tree—and my brother, a soldier, has lately been distinguishing himself at Toulon and writes home enthusiastic praise of his commanding officer, General Bonaparte."

Térézia smiled.

"I want to meet that man," she said, tapping her finger on the arm of the chair.

Joseph further informed the company that his mother was in the habit of reading aloud his brother's letters from the front, when her coffee was brewing and her saffron bread baking.

Térézia frowned. She was getting weary of listening to the idiosyncrasies of this remarkable *citoyenne* of Paris. She yawned, flashing jeweled fingers over her mouth, and glanced at the clock.

"Very nice," she said, gently polishing a rosy thumbnail. "Tell me more of this General Bonaparte. I hear he goes about dressed worse than a common soldier. They

also tell me that this wonderful young man hardly ever sleeps; occasionally he'll talk volubly; at other times he'll conveniently lose his tongue—but never under any circumstances his scowl.” She put her finger in her mouth, and looked wise as a precocious infant sure of making an effect. (She was convinced she'd make a great impression on a youthful general of twenty-four.)

“All honor to him,” said Joseph, politely. “But for Bonaparte we would certainly have lost Toulon.”

“People are very apt to turn a fortunate circumstance into a heroic action,” said Guéry. “Time will prove his mettle.”

“Exactly,” agreed Térézia. “I for one don't believe in the English. Who knows if, even without this estimable Corsican's assistance, we wouldn't have beaten them just as easily?”

Mr. Dignity with disconcerting suddenness sat up and nodded his immense head. “There is a clever headpiece for you,” said he, addressing the tips of Guéry's boots. “Cock-a-doodle-doo, what a dry company! Good-night to everyone, dry or wet. To-morrow has arrived, and Yesterday has turned the corner. . . . Joseph, my man, God bless you. God bless your mother. God bless everyone.” He blinked at Guéry. “Young man, you're improving. In ten years you will be formidable—to the ladies. I know one, a widow lately, a ‘guillotine’ widow. She is in prison, and her name is Josephine Beauharnais.” (He docked off the syllables on his huge fingers.) . . . “God bless her. . . . God bless everyone. . . .”

His voice dropped into unintelligible mutterings as his head bumped on the fender-stool. “Sleep is more blessed than kisses,” he said. “Sleep, I love you!”

He settled himself, like a corkscrew, closed his eyes, and started snoring at once.

Térézia gave him a contemptuous glance. A drunkard is everybody's friend, but a sober man makes his choice of the field. She smiled, well satisfied. . . . She had great hopes of the future. Even this Bonaparte, whom every-

one was crying up, was not invulnerable. How could a hot-blooded Corsican keep a cool front in face of a perfect woman? She laughed aloud at such a ridiculous idea. . . . Yes, she would like to meet him.

She blew a kiss through her pursed lips at a phantom.

Guéry got up and whispered in her ear. "Go to bed, darling——"

Térézia shrugged her shoulders, shook her head, tapped her heels, fluttered her eyelids, and laughed deliciously, all in the fraction of a second.

"Sit down, *mon cœur*," she recommended him. "Citoyen Joseph, give me all your attention and I'll tell you an amusing story."

Joseph bowed. "I am altogether your debtor," he said. "One day, madam, I hope to repay you."

She glanced at the beast—hugely enjoying her secret understanding with the little man who wore a wig. Her heart beat a trifle faster. Terror had its fascinations! Let them send her to prison—she'd wriggle out somehow! Her quick mind leaped ahead and fervently cursed her enemy, Robespierre—less fervently her lover, Tallien . . . Tallien might still be of some use to her.

"I knew Madame de Beauharnais in the old days," she said. "In the dear old days!" (She nodded at Joseph as much as to say, "Bring them back again, my friend.") "Once she asked me to dinner in an informal fashion. 'I dine at three,' she said. 'Come early.' I arrived very punctually and was shown into an untidy sitting-room. A maid was on her knees trying to light a damp fire; another, at my entrance, picked up armfuls of soiled table linen from the centre of the floor. I shivered, and sat down on a little sofa beside a little table on which stood a vase of faded violets, and a sheaf of old dance-programs. I studied the wall-paper opposite me for half-an-hour, waiting for the mistress of the house to appear. Then I rang the bell. 'Serve dinner,' I said to the frightened manservant, who, overawed by my grand air, obeyed. By four o'clock I had finished a fairly good meal. By

five o'clock, when I was seated by the sitting-room fire, now burning up brightly, reading a witty play, Madame de Beauharnais appears, buttoning her bracelets, and asking, 'Am I late, darling?' 'No, madame,' said I, 'not at all.' She swayed up to me and kissed the nape of my neck. 'Allow me, madame,' she said, 'to congratulate you on an unexpected dimple.' 'On the contrary, madame,' I continued, 'you are astonishingly early—for supper, *bien entendu*.' I rose to go. She was not at all put out. She swept me a ravishing curtsy. 'Madame,' she said, extending her hand, 'I thank you for a well-deserved rebuke. I hope you didn't eat up all the mayonnaise?' In the end we embraced each other, and arranged to meet at the play on the following evening. Madame de Beauharnais arrived at the curtain of the third act, with her inevitable query, 'Am I late, darling?' She will certainly put Samson in a fever of impatience, and then kiss the scaffold and smile at the first man she happens to see in the crowd."

Térézia turned to Guéry. "Have you met her?" she asked.

"No," answered Guéry, without enthusiasm.

"She is quite good-looking, though of course she is not at all young, has two big children, and her teeth are rotten."

"Doesn't sound attractive," said Guéry. (If Térézia had described Venus he would have said just the same.)

"I remember that evening as if it were yesterday," she sighed. "Garat was singing. The poor dear queen admired his voice immensely. She practically made him. He was quite the fashion a year or two ago. Where is he now?"

"In Lyons," answered Joseph.

"In prison?"

Joseph bowed.

Térézia's eyes dilated.

"How I hate you all!" she said. "Nothing is too small for you and nothing too great; and you think you'll escape the penalty of your crimes?"

"No, madame. Robespierre will meet his fate very soon, if I am not much mistaken."

"How? Time presses, sir."

Joseph glanced at the man on the floor. Mr. Dignity's mouth was wide open. He had the slack appearance of a man intent on his dreams.

"Robespierre is the most unpopular man in France," said Joseph softly, "and the most feared."

"I am confident of the future," said Térézia, serenely. "Failing anyone else, Camille Desmoulins will help me. He once did me a very kind action. He shall repeat it."

Impetuously she rose from her seat, and crossing over to Joseph, who had risen at her approach, she whispered in his ear. "Lacking men, women must act. Citizen, I'll let Desmoulins have the option of immortality. If he refuses, I'll step in."

"Camille Desmoulins was guillotined last Thursday week, on April the fifth."

Térézia stifled a sharp cry.

"The dear good man!" she breathed. "And his wife loved him."

Joseph nodded. "Danton died with him—very bravely."

"And no one spoke? No one objected?"

"I tell you, madam—the knife has clogged the brains of the people. They are satiated, but far from satisfied. It is a fantastic display of power." Joseph leaned over the sleeping man's gigantic frame. "Robespierre goes in terror of his life. He has grown to look a shadow of his former self."

"Ugh!" she said. "To think that he, and such as he, hold up France and defy God!"

"Térézia darling," interrupted Guéry, "please go to bed. You are looking so feverish. All this excitement is bad for you——"

Térézia took hold of the boy's hot hand. "Poor dear," she said, "how obstinate we are! Very well, if you insist on it I will leave you to yourselves. Good night, citizens. I'll see you in the morning."

She moved across the room. In passing a mirror she glanced at herself. "No one would imagine from my appearance that I am suffering agony," she observed complacently. "It is a great advantage, citizens."

"An unmitigated blessing, ma'am," said Joseph, coming up to her. "Are you aware that Citizen Tallien is in Paris? Hush, I pray you. We must not be overheard."

"Tallien!" breathed Térézia. "Impossible! I left him at Bordeaux. He can't be here unless he's flown."

"He made a forced journey, riding at express speed."

"Why?"

"He has been summoned to report himself at headquarters."

"Is it a fact?"

"I saw him myself this afternoon at Robespierre's house."

"Thank you," said Térézia quietly. "It makes the situation all the more interesting. Will love or greed or terror win? Unfortunately, Tallien has his limitations. I'll be imprisoned as sure as death. Citizens, I am not afraid of *ça* Tallien! Does the woman exist who is frightened of her lover?"

Térézia smiled at her two friends. "Do me a favor," she said. "Get rid of that thing"—she pointed a finger at the slumbering man—"before I get up to-morrow, or he'll certainly spoil my appetite for breakfast."

Joseph's answer was to signal to Guéry. Between them they carried the giant out of the salon, and deposited him in the little hall outside. They let him drop like a stone on the floor. He never woke.

Behind her closed door, they could hear Térézia laughing to herself.

Joseph sat down by the fire and drew out of his pocket a folded document, which he handed to Citizen Guéry. It was an order of arrest for the Citoyenne Térézia Carrabus—*de la main de Robespierre*.

Scrawled beneath his signature he had added these words: "Il faut réunir toutes les pièces relatives à la Carrabus."

CHAPTER XXXVII

SET in the immense roll of annotated history, the French Revolution—with a paltry hundred years or so intervening between then and now—seems incredibly close to us. At times we may well fear that it will repeat itself, on a vastly larger scale, but, wisely, we dismiss such ideas as unwelcome dreams.

It was a mad, bad world in this spring of 1794. Yet even then town sparrows could chirp, children play, men and women work, dig, bake and mend—all for that important crumb of existence so dear to the heart of man. The Terror might have paralyzed France—left her doddering like a lame idiot—except for this merciful necessity of carrying on. Eventually, as we know, horror did pass away, like a heavy cloud, leaving the morning brilliantly fair.

The day following Térézia's arrival in Paris redeemed the character of wayward April. The storm of the previous night had given place to brilliant sunshine, which shone over the city in a perfect halo of gold; it glistened on roofs still rain-wet, and on the tender leafage of budding trees; it flecked sanded courtyards with little discs of light, and lit upon unexpected pools of water; it effaced the smell of sewage gas, and other rank unpleasantness, bringing to the fore the cleanly odor of damp earth and the scent of dewy, freshly-gathered flowers.

Upon the soft blue sky, tiny feathery clouds drifted before a gentle breeze. It was difficult to associate this rejuvenated morning with death—sudden death, premeditated, applauded, and of alarming regularity. Truth to tell, satiety had taken the sharp edge off the bloody appetites of vengeful citizens. To make matters worse, class was no longer respected. Any individual, no matter how

humble his birth, was open to suspicion! Men of one breed turned and denounced each other. It was an uneasy time. Every true patriot (if he valued his life) lived in the open, willingly facing the blazing light of publicity, trumpeting his innocence into the ears of the sweltering crowd, thankful if, by a miracle, he escaped condemnation.

The leaders—scenting the temper of the populace—wrangled in open court; howled and shrieked and spat at each other in a frenzy of patriotism which but poorly veiled each man's secret fear. Out in the great squares, under April skies, La Guillotine did her work, coldly indifferent to everyone.

Behind barred door and shut windows, where two or three were gathered together, speculation ran rife, and tongues wagged fast but to no purpose. No one seemed able to cope with the situation—all the more terrible for the balmy air of spring and the dew-wet violets, to be bought (cheaply) in the flower markets of Paris.

It was eight o'clock in the morning. Robespierre had finished his dressing and stood by his bedroom window. He was not a pretty sight. His eyes were fishy, and his narrow hands—rather well-shaped and white—were hot as coals, with an inner lining of damp skin. A fastidious man might well be excused some natural repugnance in shaking Robespierre's hand—apart from the sentimental significance they were actually rather terrible hands to touch.

Having finished a finicking toilette—the higher he rose in office, the greater thought he bestowed on his appearance—Robespierre sat down in his favorite arm-chair, by the window, drew forward a little satin-wood table—shaped like a kidney, inset with a mosaic border of green laurel leaves—rang the table bell—a shrill-voiced piece of silver—and took up a small yellow-backed pamphlet. He was well acquainted with its contents—a commendable, concise, clever little treatise on social matters. His brother, Augustine, had sent him the book from Avignon,

together with a flattering report of its young author, a studious and exemplary artillery officer, by name Napoleon Bonaparte. The book was called *An Evening at Beaucaire*.

It very neatly voiced Robespierre's policy, without any groveling servitude of spirit. In fact, the little book was full of a strange new personality, and the style, though rugged, bore witness to lucidity and a straightforward directness of manner which appealed to Maximilien's sense of fitness. (There is no devil on earth, or below, without his own little set of weights and measures. Robespierre prided himself on the accuracy of his scales. . . .)

On this twinkling April-rain-washed morning, he was fully alive to his critical faculty. For some time he had noticed Bonaparte and singled him out for protection. In fact, thanks to his influence, the young man had been reinstated in the Army. He had also, privily, sent word to his brother, in Avignon, to look him up. He was a young man who wanted watching. His mathematical treatises had made extremely interesting reading. And as to his personality—as yet undeclared—it had filled Robespierre with anticipation. A spice of good luck, a handful of kind friends, and that sallow-faced stripling ought to advance on his own merits. There, in a nutshell, lay life's secret. No man, even if flung to the front, can stay there except by his own ability. A man has only himself to thank for what he is. Robespierre smiled to himself (a grim performance though not lacking in kindly intention in this instance) as he remembered this "valuable officer's" (Augustin's report of 1792—since amply justified) far from reassuring presence—the recollection of his leanness, his awkward gait, his untidy hair, filled him with amusement. And yet, when he recalled his eyes—eyes of mesmeric depth—he had to allow that nothing about him really mattered in comparison with his undoubted talent. He was undeniably gifted! "My friend," exclaimed Robespierre aloud, laying down Bonaparte's book on the table, "if you live you'll make history. There is

grit in you, and you take long views." (Robespierre glanced contemptuously towards the Place de la Révolution, sneering at so tedious a proceeding as the guillotine.) "What this Corsican soldier wants," he thought, "is war, not murder, and sudden death. . . ." Robespierre yawned. He was getting a bit hazy. He swore at his man. Why did he not bring him his breakfast? His head was aching . . . aching as if it would burst.

His servant knocked on the door and entered the room with a little brown tray containing a cup of chocolate, a basin of porridge and some jam puffs.

He sipped his chocolate, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, spat on the floor. Uncovering his porringer—a handsome blue Sèvres china dish with gilt handles—he devoured his porridge. A thin thread of steam wandered past his face up to the low ceiling, and was lost in the intricacies of damp-rot. (He lodged poorly with one Duploy, a carpenter in the Rue St. Honoré.) He crunched his yellow teeth into his crisp fresh pastries and smacked his lips. To-day the tarts were filled with strawberry jam. Robespierre loved strawberry jam.

On the stroke of nine a loud tap at the door announced the arrival of Citoyen Salicet—his barber—a little wizened fellow, who always entered the room at a run, as if propelled forcibly from behind.

"Good morning, *citoyen*. A fine morning!"

Robespierre spat at the exact centre of a medallion on the carpet—he reached it by a nicety of calculation. Then he shuffled his feet.

"Quite fine," he agreed. "Have you brought your new powder?"

"I have it with me, *citoyen*. It is as smooth as velvet and as white as snow. Allow me."

The barber from a cupboard fetched a wrapper of none too white linen and enveloped his client in its ample folds.

"If the *citoyen* would give himself the infinite trouble of crossing to the dressing-table. The light is better——"

The barber rubbed his thin hands together and twinkled

his little eyes at the great man. "The *citoyen*, if I may be allowed to say so, is looking the picture of health this morning." Still rubbing his hands, he bowed deeply. "All Paris rings with the *citoyen's* praises. 'Robespierre, the savior of France! Robespierre, the man of genius! Robespierre with the heart of a child! When he punishes it is but to reprove naughtiness. . . .' Forgive me, gossiping thus early in the morning." Citoyen Salicet, with a nimble gesture, opened the little bag he was carrying and placed on the dressing-table a methyated-spirit stove, crimping-irons, a large box of powder, and a length of new black satin ribbon.

"Black is so tender against white," he murmured, passing the ribbon through his hands. "I have taken the liberty of bringing this. The *citoyen* must tell me if I have done wrong."

"I hate black! I loathe black! Azure blue is my true color, as you know. You are a leprous fool! Irritate me again and I'll have your carcass flung in the pit, without a preliminary embrace of the savior of men."

"*Citoyen*, dear good *citoyen*—I was only—joking," stammered the unfortunate man. "Black is hideous wear. Black would not suit Apollo, much less——" he stopped, working his mouth in a hideous imitation of a smile. . . . Saints protect him! The least little slip might indeed send him headlong into perdition. It would be like Robespierre's humor to fling him alive into a swarming pit of mangled bodies . . . like his humor. . . .

The tears started in Salicet's eyes. The beautiful morning seemed to him a crowning piece of insolence—perhaps this was his last?

Robespierre cleared his throat noisily. "Silly ass, I don't kill fleas—especially useful fleas. You are the only man in Paris who has the knack of dressing my head. Be satisfied."

"I am overwhelmed with honor," said Citoyen Salicet, actually so delighted at this affable statement that,

through his blanched lips, he whistled a popular air from the music-halls.

Robespierre crossed to the dressing-table, in high good-humor. "Dear, dear!" he said. "In this frightful pressure of business I never have the opportunity of attending places of amusement." (He carefully dipped his finger into a pot of rouge and smoothed his lips.) "Are they playing to full houses?"

"Packed. Paris has never been so gay. They have a little piece on now, at the Théâtre Michelet, which is attracting enormous audiences. The *citoyen* must really go and see it. It is rich! rich!"

The barber as he spoke was busily powdering and patting his client's peruke, and adjusting his thin locks into a scheme of unprecedented elegance.

Robespierre blinked at his powdery reflection in the mirror. He was gratified that the theatres were doing well. The crowds must be kept amused. A bored crowd is often troublesome. Out of sheer weariness of spirit, good-tempered people have been known to behave disgracefully. Tired out, they will yell to no purpose except for the delight of bawling. From bawling it is but a step to rioting and fighting. Robespierre, out of national funds, generously supported the drama. He had even proposed getting Pierre Garat (conceited coxcomb that he was) out of prison to sing to his admiring Parisians, who were all foolishly delighted with the Bordelais singer. Robespierre wanted more moving space for himself—it would be a good thing, surely, to get up a counter-attraction elsewhere? Danton and Camille Desmoulins had, amongst others opposed his kindly thought in the interest of the public, but at the time he had waved aside the matter as a piece of triviality unworthy of his attention. Later he had signed the death-warrant of these two men—culpably dishonest because they had voted against him, and sullied the fame of the Government with their jealousy. He had also personally seen them die. Danton had borne himself bravely, flinging back his great head, and, at the very

last, had glared at him with contemptuous pity (save the mark!). The winning man is surely deserving of envy? On that day Robespierre had felt more than ordinarily sure of himself. He had taken a keen and sensitive pleasure in poor Desmoulins' unseemly behavior, had egged him on to make a still further exhibition of his grief. Camille, at sight of his weeping wife and family—specially invited for the occasion—had mingled his tears with theirs, nay, he had actually struggled to escape his sentence! Paying no attention to Danton's pleading: "Calm yourself, my friend," Desmoulins' voice had rung out above the heads of the gaping crowd—a flattering concourse of absorbed spectators: "O my wife, my well-beloved, I shall see you no more!" . . . Eventually he had quieted down. To Danton was left the final theatrical speech: "Samson, thou wilt show my head to the people; it is worth showing."

Robespierre tore at his dressing-gown. "Take it off," he said. "I am choking! I want air—space—light!"

Needless to say, the barber obsequiously obeyed. Dear, dear, how changeable are great men, he thought, as, very hurriedly, he repacked his little bag. He did not dare speak.

Robespierre spat on the floor.

Someone gave a loud knock on the door.

Robespierre gave a quick jump. He bit his thumbnail, jerked his neck round—a trick of his—and spoke over his shoulder: "Come in." His voice sounded thick.

"Good morning, my dear friend. Why, how smart you look! I thought I would catch you early, before you went out. We didn't nearly finish our conversation yesterday."

And in walked Citoyen Tallien.

Tallien, at his worst and at his best, was more or less dependent on others. He could crush heavily, like a big stone accurately flung, but he had little or no real power. He loved large effects. He had wetted his fleshy lips, in glad anticipation of the September massacres, and had

borne himself so foolishly at that dismal affair that much of the responsibility for the gross entertainment will for ever—justly or unjustly—cling to his memory. He did not (as far as we know) swing a club himself, nor thrust a pike at defenceless womanhood, but he was one of the responsible factors of the carnage. We can imagine him, whistling beneath his breath, at some handy street door—and exultantly (at a distance) following the rush of action; breathing heavily; alive to the danger and the triumph—ever a coward, he, “the butcher of Bordeaux.”

Not so to-day. He’d come into his kingdom and he knew that his new spiritual clothes fitted him *à merveille*. He and his former chief now shared, as it were, a perambulator for two, the Revolution being an impartial, deft-handed nurse. She made no difference between her gifted children. . . . In the train of this comfortable reflection, Tallien suddenly remembered the fate of his confrères, Danton and the brilliant, gentlemanly Desmoulins—for a moment he winced, and veiled his momentary alarm by a cheap witticism.

“Extraordinary cheap living in Paris,” he said, “when the nation can afford to sell Notre-Dame¹ for six pounds ten shillings. I was passing the Cathedral this morning, and was much amused at a notice nailed on the great door to the effect that one Jean Pierre, an ironmonger, had, by public auction, acquired the church, including all inventories, for the said sum. Dirt-cheap, I call it.”

“A very poor price,” agreed Robespierre. “Churches are a drug on the market. I put no reserve on Notre-Dame. The man has probably got his money back in the ironwork alone—and the stained glass, they tell me, is quite valuable.”

“Is he going to pull it down?”

¹ As late as 1833 the following inscription was affixed to the southern tower of Notre-Dame: “National Property. For Sale.”—*Dr. Poumies de la Siboutie*.

Owing to a difference of opinion, the Cathedral only remained the property of the ironsmith for a few weeks, when the nation bought it back again.

"I never meddle with an honest citizen's private property. Maybe he bought it on that account."

"Citizen, it wouldn't surprise me at all, if presently there was a boom in religion."

Robespierre eyed Tallien's rather florid coat and great big splashing collar of bottle-green velvet before answering.

"Every rat has his deity," he said, lisping the words with ineffable conceit. Then, sitting upright in his deep arm-chair, he crossed his meagre legs, and spoke, quietly. "I am going to apply for the situation," he said.

Tallien stared—in very frank amazement.

"I intend to institute in my own person the glorious reign of the Supreme Being. Naturally it is a foregone conclusion, whom, in the first instance, the nation will choose for this enviable post. They'll want a firm man. Under my guidance as the Supreme Being, France will weather the storm. She shall pray to me, and, when convenient, I will answer her prayers—*when* convenient," he repeated, tapping his fingers together. "It'll be no sine-cure, my friend. But I am convinced it can be done by reason, humane treatment, and ceremony. The people love ceremony; the flare of colored lights and audacity would appeal to their imagination—they'll get their money's worth in an ineffaceable feast of love. Love is a supreme factor in life. France began by despising me. She went on to fear me. She shall end by worshipping me." A fanatical light gleamed in his light blue eyes.

"A most interesting programme," drawled Tallien, yawning. "How you have changed, dear man! I remember the time when your humility hurt me, positively hurt me."

"I have changed," said the other dreamily. "It is not so very long ago that I was obliged to break off my legal business because I found certain formalities incompatible with my conscience."

Tallien sighed unctuously. "You have passed that milestone in your life," he said cheerily, "and passed it very

successfully. Ha, ha! your scruples, by now, would not cover a pin's head."

Robespierre bounded to his feet.

"And I'll go on to the bitter end!" he shouted. "Do you think I care what you charlatans say? I alone rule France! I am the deity of regenerated France. Through me shall tribulation cease to be, and all manner of wickedness. I can see peace ahead—a purged and purified country. Friends and foes alike shall die in the national cause. Even you, my dear, dear Tallien, even you. Your blood shall flow in a wave of rejoicing. What matters the fate of the units, if the hallowed principles are left intact? Religion and life are indissolubly joined together. I have given the people great joy, but they shall know greater. Death to traitors! Death!" He walked round the room with outstretched arms, gesticulating and crossing himself devoutly. "I am holy," he said, "holy!"

Tallien's big eyes dilated with fear. After all, he stood leagues behind Robespierre in confounded impudence. What was his vanity compared to this maniac's idolatry of himself? Had he brought the Catholic religion to shame to install himself in its place? The people craved a divinity. They might accept Robespierre's monstrous demand. They might dance round him in a frenzy of fanatical delight, waving bloody pikes, as anchorites wave their holy vessels. In this pandemonium, where was his allotted place?

Tallien's hand shook—no nervous tremor, but a downright, obvious movement. He was frightened. The pleasant April morning seemed alive with visible demons dragging him down. . . . Look at Danton's fate—a man of resolute integrity. None could shake Danton, they'd said—and none could buy him. Robespierre, that little, palsied, dancing satyr, had not only shaken him, but he'd killed him. He had denounced him, and he had fallen, fallen in the prime of life; fallen not as a giant falls, but like an insignificant cone from the great tree of life. The

wind had passed over him and no one remembered his place. . . .

"Tallien?"

Tallien looked up and bowed very deferentially to the little man in a sky-blue coat—with a very white and very well crimped wig set on his narrow head—who now held out a hot, damp hand of reconciliation to his friend.

"Forgive my impetuosity," he said, warmly. "I want to hear more about yourself. I rather fancy at Bordeaux the lion in love behaved indiscreetly. Remember a public man has no privacy."

Tallien's blatant vanity was tickled by Robespierre's reference to his love-affair. He smiled all over his big face. He wiped his forehead with a large red silk handkerchief patterned in yellow and green—he was devilish hot. (An interview with Robespierre generally left him either warm or cold. . . .) Then he blew his enormous nose, gustily.

Robespierre observed him carefully. Certainly, this erstwhile printer's devil had expanded into a very fashionable young man. His taste in jewelry was, however, vulgar. His hands were loaded with rings. His watch-fob displayed immense diamonds. His cravat-pin—one huge pink pearl—looked, somehow, like a boil, displaced from his fleshy cheek. His face had grown fatter. His big eyes had a rim of pink on each heavy lid—they were blood-shot, too. Probably excesses,—in divers directions—had ruined his health.

Robespierre smiled. "Really I ought to scold you," he said. "You are a dangerous young man."

Tallien, enlarged his smile, if possible. (Most of us like to be called dangerous and young. Youth is precious, and danger, under certain conditions, implies charming potentialities.)

Tallien spread out his large hands and slowly twisted a three-foiled diamond ring round his right index finger. Then he looked up and said, with engaging frankness:

"As to that little matter, I plead guilty."

"How so?"

"*Ci-devant* Fontenay was practically in a helpless position at Bordeaux. I thought it my duty to look after her."

"There is a limit to mercy."

Tallien laughed loudly. "True, but never to a woman's demands."

"What did she want?"

Again Tallien smiled in a halo of very agreeable recollections. So bright were they that they blinded him to Robespierre's evident want of sympathy. "Love," he said, "and love, and more love."

"And you could satisfy her, I suppose?"

"Good Lord, yes!"

"And incidentally, yourself?"

Tallien utterly forgot his caution. "She is adorable!" he sputtered. "A woman in a million, beautiful, clever, possessed of every virtue under the sun! I assure you, if you knew her better, you would grow to respect her. Come over to my little place. I'll ask her to meet you at dinner. Name your own day, *citoyen*. I know you are a very busy man. We'll be delighted to see you, delighted. She is a darling, and playful as a kitten, a dear little soft kitten. You must be kind to her. I insist on kindness. Remember she is as shy as a dove—*la petite*. Promise me, *citoyen*, to honor us at your very earliest opportunity. Térézia shall feed you well and, if you still appreciate music, she shall, after dinner, sing to you '*Les Trois Sœurs en défilé*,' a song in a thousand. . . ." Here Tallien suddenly became aware of Robespierre's lack of interest in his hospitality.

A tremor chilled his vein of warm enthusiasm. The pleasant little dinner the pretty little song, a reunion of two lovers and a friend, faded as a dream which is told.

The two men looked at each other without flinching. They wanted to tear out each other's secrets, to measure each other's strength; each wanted, if possible, to get the other at a disadvantage.

Robespierre's icy glance changed into an expression of

contemptuous disapproval. He spat on the floor—once, twice, thrice.

"I have put your mistress under observation," he said briefly. "Last night I made out an order of arrest for the *citoyenne* Térézia Carrabus."

Tallien jumped forward. "I tell you she is mine!" he shouted, opening his jaws to their widest extent.

"I tell you she is mine!" mimicked the Dictator, mouth-ing back again. "You little—big worm! Stay where you are! Remember, my very excellent deputy, that any man is liable to pay, with his own life, for seditious language. The sanctity of the State is inviolable." Robespierre raised his eyes to heaven.

Tallien smoothed his windpipe with the index finger and the thumb of his right hand. His big nails were very bright and in need of cutting.

"She is innocent," he murmured, uncertainly.

"I think not. I consider the lady a dangerous person to the community."

Tallien nodded. "No doubt you are right, *citoyen*," he said, still in that same strangled voice of his.

"No doubt," agreed Robespierre smoothly, "we will come to an amicable settlement later on. I have an engagement this morning. For the matter of that, I can offer you a very good seat if you care to see the show. We have rather a notable execution on this morning—that of Elizabeth, Louis Capet's sister, you know."

Tallien bowed. "I thank you. You are very kind."

"Dear fellow! Don't mention it. What is the time? Ten o'clock? We'd better be going. Samson is sulky if he's kept waiting. He is sure to have a large attendance this morning. It is a fine day, and people still take a curious interest in the Capet family. Nothing dies so hard as tradition. I assure you the widow's execution, though spoiled by bad weather, attracted an enormous concourse of sightseers. She was nothing to look at—any other old woman would have done in her place, except for the name. Her spirit was broken at the trial, where

they certainly put her through some nasty questions. How do you like my new hat? It is quaint, isn't it?"

"It is delightful," said Tallien vaguely, engrossed by his own unpleasant predicament.

He watched his friend very carefully adjust the new hat on his splendid new wig, and then take up a stick of lip salve and gently stroke his lips. The effect, probably, wasn't an artistic success, because the Dictator with an oath, rubbed the stuff off with a piece of rather dirty cotton-wool. He only regained his composure after a sidelong glance at himself in the mirror. Quite distinctly he murmured to his bodyguard of invisible spirits, "I am Robespierre . . . Ro-bes-pierre!" His voice wailed across the untidy room. He was evidently crooning a beloved litany.

"Yes," he said, taking up his walking-cane and a pair of white kid gloves, made out of skins *à la mode*,¹ "Louis Capet's sister dies this morning. A stubborn creature. She won't give us any fun, I promise you. The grand air is tedious. Come along; I have promised to be present, and it would not be etiquette to keep the good Elizabeth waiting. I am rather punctilious in these matters."

"Certainly," said Tallien, dully. "I suppose she is the last of that particular lot?"

"Yes, except the children, of course. I don't approve of killing children. The Dauphin has a very comfortable home at the Temple, and presently he'll be apprenticed to Simon, the shoemaker, and taught his master's trade."

"Of course," agreed Tallien, grinning at this piece of exquisite wit. "Everyone knows how splendidly the king's son is treated. Dressed in fine linen and purple every day."

"I won't answer for the linen," interrupted Robespierre facetiously, "but I'll swear to the purple."

He was alluding to the bruises on the little boy's attenuated body.

¹ "At Meudon," says Montguillard, "there was a tannery of human skins; of such of the guillotined as seemed worth flaying; of which perfectly good wash-leather was made, for breeches and other purposes."

The two redoubtable leaders of the Jacobins walked at a quick pace, linked arm-in-arm, towards the Place de la Révolution. The streets were very crowded with pedestrians and wheeled traffic. It was a lovely day, warm and exquisitely fresh. At No. 68, Rue St. Honoré, a hawthorn tree, in full bloom, attracted Robespierre's admiration.

"What a symbol of life to come!" he said, halting for a moment, and pointing out the white blossom to Tallien.

A flower-seller drew his attention next. He smiled kindly at the woman, gave her a coin, and selected from her fragrant basket two bunches of violets. The one he pinned in his own coat; and the other he presented to Tallien.

"Dear friend," he said, "accept it as a mark of eternal friendship. *Il faut faire ce petit sacrifice*; for yourself, if for no one else, you must denounce this nice lady of Bordeaux. Otherwise consequences might be serious. I am only giving you a friendly hint—take it or leave it."

Tallien placed his bunch of violets in the button-hole of his green velvet lapel. "Thanks," he said. "I'll take it."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TALLIEN felt sick at heart. He took not the smallest interest in *ci-devant* Princess Elizabeth's dull execution. He considered her farewell embrace of a former lady of her court as being demonstrative and in bad taste. Hadn't they sufficient time for kissing and hugging in prison, without requiring to do so in public? He had noticed a woman in the crowd lay aside her knitting-needles and surreptitiously wipe away a tear . . . d——d cheap emotion! And all for a *ci-devant* princess! Women were all alike—undependable, not worthy of an honest man's true affection. He must accustom himself to look upon Térézia as a rose which has bloomed. He had gathered the rose, worn it next his heart, tended it with utmost care, and now the rose was dead, he'd have to fling it on the dustpan and get a new one.

Tallien tapped his heavy cane on the rude flooring of Robespierre's private box—exactly facing the executioner's platform. . . . Lord! what a lengthy show! One hundred and ninety-seven executions—a mixed lot, most of them pale, and speechless, like rather tattered rag-dolls. One by one they mounted the platform. One by one they were carried down—a back way—and thrust higgledy-piggledy into a waiting cart. Tallien could just see, round the corner, a distasteful procession of mean wagons waiting for their unsavory loads. Even the drivers looked grim and bored. Over all the fragrance of God's perfect day.

By a mere chance, a company of swallows, probably journeying north, had alighted on the highest post of the scaffolding. There must have been twenty of them, pluming their feathers trilling their love-songs, and looking down on the great human beings; these gifted, wonderful,

august human beings who, naturally, intimidated little birds. . . .

Tallien writhed on his hard wooden chair. The silence around him was depressing, awful. Even Robespierre, in the brilliant light of immortal spring, looked more than usually green. He might have been an animated corpse. . . . Look now, that head (just being shown to the people by Samson's assistant) was far more alive than he . . . quite a pretty little face, too; the eyes were wide open, with a sweet and happy expression . . . extraordinary. . . . How would T  r  zia appear under the same circumstances? They would be sure to pick her out for exhibition. Samson had a pretty taste in female beauty.

By the living God! he would not participate in such a foul deed! He loved her! His woman! His soul! His life! His all in all! . . . He loved her . . . he would save her . . . he would die with her, holding her lovely mouth pressed to his adoring lips. A little dose of poison, and the daylight would be forever shuttered. Probably it was very comfortable in the deep, dark grave. He would implore the House to give him, and T  r  zia, a private place of interment. He would choose it himself, miles away from tormented Paris, and in some little country churchyard, maybe under the guardianship of a young hawthorn tree, they'd sleep forever. The tree would grow, year by year, and expand and whisper over the tomb of Love Everlasting. . . .

Tallien gave a huge sigh.

Then he perceived the beauty of the day and the awful ugliness of death. He was not ready to die. He must (O harrowing thought!) let T  r  zia take the strange journey all alone. His loving thoughts would follow her along the road.

"How are you? Nice to see you back in Paris, looking so fit and well. Saint-Just is speaking—stay and listen."

"Thanks, thanks, but I must fly. I have business in the committee-room."

"I'll keep a place for you. They are sure to wrangle sooner or later—so amusing. Nice morning, isn't it?"

"Delightful," murmured Tallien, smiling at a cluster of deputies, new and old. It was a time of quick promotion, or as some said, of quick disgrace. Whatever the cause of the vacancy, the House had to be filled—and a jabbering monkey-house it was!

Tallien, trying to walk upright, swaggered out of the hall, followed by many curious glances. Robespierre's warm affection for him had been a matter of some speculation amongst the members. All day he'd hardly allowed him out of his sight. Together they had lunched—after witnessing the executions—at Gaillard's, a noted place for oysters and steak pies. After a protracted meal they had walked, for half-an-hour, in the gay arcades of the *ci-devant* Palais Royal, now the Palais Egalité, where each gentleman had bought a trifling piece of jewelry from Franchard. Robespierre had his favorite spaniel tucked under his arm, and more than once he had been observed to kiss the little dog, very tenderly. He always kissed Niniche when exceptionally satisfied.

Then these two united friends had sat, side by side, in the House, listening to the afternoon debate with profound attention. Once or twice they had whispered together, and taken down hasty notes in their pocket-books.

Tallien walked into the committee-room, where some dozen men sat round a large table, sparsely furnished with a few documents. The room, though large, was badly ventilated and lighted.

Robespierre looked up at his friend's entrance, with his goose-quill suspended in his right hand. He was just about to affix his signature to the morrow's death-list. A long blue sheet of paper lay on his desk, neatly filled up with a great many names.

"I'll want you presently," he said genially to Tallien, making room for him by his side.

Tallien sat down.

Every eye was fixed on him.

Robespierre, very briefly, scanned the official document, wrote his name quickly at the bottom of the sheet and handed it to a waiting clerk who took it with a deep bow.

"I am gratified," he said, "to be able to inform you, citizens that the executions have been quadrupled. At the present moment we have in Paris awaiting their trial, some twelve thousand prisoners, all incarcerated on very grave charges. I grieve to tell you, that, daily their number is augmented by the admission of fresh criminals of the deepest dye."

Robespierre sighed and, with his pen, absently drew on his blotting-pad a little nondescript drawing.

No one answered this statement.

"Paris is a hotbed of vice," continued their leader, in the same level, calm, matter-of-fact tone. "Citizens, it is our duty to sink our individual differences, nay, our very affections in our country's interests." He looked at Tallien. "It is gratifying to hear such excellent reports of the good work done in Bordeaux. According to my able ally and dear friend, Tallien, the town is practically drained of seditious influence. He has not spared himself in the exercise of his duty."

"I have done my best," said Tallien, modestly.

Robespierre thoughtfully rubbed his little pointed chin.

"Such unflinching-honesty of purpose deserves recognition. I call for a vote of thanks for Citoyen Tallien."

Tallien held up a deprecating hand. "Citizens," he said humbly, "I am but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and my best reward lies in the calmness of my conscience and in my sublime faith in the future."

Two or three voices murmured approval at such noble sentiments, and one bewildered legislator whispered beneath his breath, "Dear Christ, forgive them, for they know not what they do." No one heard this petition to a Savior who, officially, no longer existed in France.

Robespierre sighed again; perceiving his careless drawing in front of him, he very carefully tore off the offend-

ing sheet, crushed it in his hand, and flung it into the waste-paper basket.

"As you know, citizens," he continued, "we have lately been wounded in our most sacred feelings by malicious rumors from Bordeaux. It gives me much pleasure to be able to give you a fresh proof of Citoyen Tallien's untarnished honor. To allay scandalous reports connecting his good name with that of a somewhat notorious lady, my friend gives us the lie direct by denouncing (he looked at a paper on his desk)—denouncing Citoyenne Térézia Carrabus as a person dangerous to the community. Need we question his disinterested motives? The lady has enjoyed his virtuous friendship—is it not so?"

"Yes," answered Tallien, briskly.

"Of his own free will, for the good of our beloved France, he renounces his friendship——"

A murmur of sympathetic approval greeted these words.

Tallien rose and bowed to the chairman.

"I denounce the Citoyenne Térézia Carrabus the divorced wife of *ci-devant* de Fontenay, domiciled in Paris, on the charge of plotting against the Government," he said.

"Hear! hear!"

Robespierre wiped his eyes. Then he looked at Tallien. "Be so kind as to sign your indictment officially. Citizens. I will want two witnesses below Citoyen Tallien's signature."

"Thank you," said Tallien.

Robespierre glanced at the attested paper which Tallien formally handed to him.

"If the Carrabus is found guilty of the indictment on which she is charged she shall be condemned to death," he said.

Tallien bowed.

"You agree with me, citizen?"

"I agree," said Tallien.

CHAPTER XXXIX

BEING an exceptionally light morning, the blessed sunshine was actually penetrating the very blurred window of Madame de Beauharnais, first-floor bedroom, which she had the privilege of sharing with two other ladies. She considered herself very fortunate in having secured a lodging so much coveted on account of its privacy.

On the ground floor the apartments—or dungeons—were all large, and consequently overcrowded; in some of the rooms more than forty prisoners were confined in close discomfort.

Madame la vicomtesse de Beauharnais—ever a charming optimist—looked upon her privileges as far outweighing her miseries. She had lived in this little box of a room for over five months, and by this time she made light of its poor ventilation—after all, you couldn't expect prison windows to open, and as to the wretched straw palliasse which she shared with her two companions in misfortune, it was dirty, certainly, but it did not actually walk away. Well, yes, the wooden floor, she admitted, might have been cleaner with advantage, but stone was infinitely colder than wood. The soup was nasty, nasty, but remember, *chères amies*, that without soup they would expire—not prettily. Before a lady died of starvation she got very ugly and thin—so thin! (Madame de Beauharnais would demonstrate the figure of a starving lady by means of one of her precious hairpins, twisted into a spiral.) True, the want of fresh linen was a great trial. *Mais, que voulez-vous?* you had your capable hands and a piece of real soap. . . .

“Térédia, Ninon,—say what you will,” said the charming Creole, taking up her one and only chemise from the basin and wringing it out carefully, “we are extremely

fortunate. God is good, and Joseph is a darling. To give us pleasure he has risked his head, and ours, seventy times seven." (Joseph had procured them the tablet of soap.)

One day this angel, in the disguise of a surly turnkey, had brought his "favorites" (of course they were favorites) a bunch of white lilac—real white lilac. It was before Térézia was admitted to the restless intimacy of Cell 306.

A week before her arrival Joseph had astounded the viscountess and the duchess by this wonderful gift. As they could not very well kiss Joseph they had kissed each other, and, as water was as scarce as soap, they had prudently watered their precious "garden" (it grew at once into a marvelous, spacious, delicious garden)—that modest bunch of drooping lilac—with their tears. They had to cry—it was so beautiful.

They hadn't the heart to throw away the garden when, all too soon, it faded and drooped, and the little white, perfumed honey petals turned a dingy brown. It was still there—on the window-shelf—and all three ladies obdurately refused to acknowledge that their garden had, practically, been a failure. Joseph did not dare cart in another freehold—a prison is full of jealousy and espionage and scandal. He explained this to the ladies, when he called them to have their dinner in the common hall . . . ugh! How Joséphine, Térézia and Ninon loathed the dining-room ineffectually lighted by dim lanterns, where the rats and mice and spiders and cockroaches made free of their poor finery with their indecent prison manners. The rats at Les Carmes were the most offensive beasts on earth, not even excepting Robespierre.

Across their little window the ladies had strung a line. Owing to the exigencies of space, Monday was Joséphine's washing day; Thursday, Ninon's; Saturday, Térézia's. It was Monday to-day—a glorious Monday! Through the grimy panes the young April sun shot a delicious promissory note into the hearts of the prisoners.

Joséphine shook out her chemise and hung it on the line. "When the sun is shining," she murmured, "there is no reason to complain. The sun is the best doctor in the world. Children, think of our friends of the dungeons, condemned to perpetual darkness and the perpetual society of underbred people. All very well to talk of the sisterhood of suffering—I, for one, could never suffer a vulgar woman. Imagine Blanche de la Trémouille's feelings, being boxed up with that old shrew of a rag-picker—her late bailiff's wife. It is an outrage to our class to denounce such creatures."

"I did not see Madame de Trémouille last night at dinner," said Térézia Carrabus, dully.

Joséphine, in the act of pulling out her stockings, let them drop to the floor. "You are quite right," she said; "she was not there." Tears welled out of her beautiful eyes and coursed down her pale cheeks. "It hurts—it still hurts. Bah! what nonsense philosophers talk in saying you can grow accustomed to everything. It only shows you what shocking nonsense clever people talk."

She picked up the stockings and shook them violently.

Madame la duchesse d'Aiguillon observed her anxiously. "Pray be more careful, madame, they won't bear rough handling," she said.

Joséphine sighed, and, with a graceful gesture, wiped away her tears with the back of her hand. Smiling, rather forlornly, she held up her stockings to the light; they were full of holes.

"I don't understand it," she said petulantly. "We hardly ever take exercise, and, as a rule, I only put them on for dinner. I will never again go to Fouchet for my stockings, never!"

"Madame, I believe you," said Térézia, in the same toneless voice.

She was seated on the one stool the room afforded, with her head supported in her hands, looking the picture of woebegone beauty. A week in prison hadn't taken her hair out of curl, nor the peach bloom out of her com-

plexion, nor the surpassing elegance out of her splendidly clean dress. She wore a dark shade of navy silk, with a black silk sash and innumerable frills of real Valenciennes lace. Round her bare throat was a gold chain, holding a pendant set with one large aquamarine surrounded with diamonds. On the shelf, beside the dismal lilac plantation, lay an elegant hat trimmed with shaded blue feathers and a touch of velvet. Against the dingy drab walls, scrawled and splashed and defaced, that hat looked like a gaudy peacock. Needless to say, Joséphine had admired it immensely, and had tried it on—several times—by the reflection of Madame d'Aiguillon's voice. They had no other looking-glass but each other's kindly verdict. Madame d'Aiguillon had much approved of the hat. . . .

Joséphine very quickly and very daintily hung her stockings on the line, and pattered across in her pretty bare feet to Térézia; kneeling down at her side, she impulsively flung her arms round her neck.

"*Petite*," she murmured, "of course you are feeling nervy and altogether miserable. A week of this place is torture! I wanted to fly out of my skin after eight days—it is the truth—now I am almost contented with this little tinpot basin of life. And I don't really mind the fleas; after a time they grow so sick of you they don't want to bite. I laugh at them! Cheer up, Térézia, darling! I know it is fearfully dull after all your gay doings in Bordeaux, your nice parties and dresses and all that. But really it is terribly exciting to hear the lists read out at night. It is also agreeable to meet old friends and new prisoners. We are always coming and going, hoping and despairing."

Térézia gave a forlorn smile, and kissed Joséphine on the mouth.

"You are very kind," she said, "and very patient with me."

"Not at all, I am only selfish. It is far better to try and see the best side of everything. We can't get out—

or at least we don't want to under the circumstances—so we must just make up our minds not to grumble.”

“I would like to scream.”

“Well, scream—you big, big donkey!”

Térédia laid her head against Joséphine's shoulder.

“Everything is so frightful and unpleasant——”

“Indeed you are wrong. What is the matter with this room? Haven't we got a treasure in Joseph? How amusing that he should have fetched you here. He is quite an amazing man. One day he will burst in on us, roaring, ‘*Citoyennes*, you are all at liberty! All Paris is free, free of tyranny and bloodshed and horror!’ Think of it!” Joséphine swayed forward and clapped her hands. “I believe I shall die of happiness,” she faltered. “Smile, madame! Beauty can't afford to frown. You are getting two ugly lines on your forehead. Your eyebrows are shaggy. See.” Joséphine dexterously smoothed, with the tips of her delicate fingers, Térédia's brows. . . . “That's better. You look perfectly lovely. Doesn't she, Ninon?”

“Lovely,” said the duchess.

Térédia smiled.

“Look here, you darling,” said Joséphine, jumping to her feet. “If you promise *never* to complain again (after all, you have got *us!*), I will give you my greatest treasure on earth. I will, indeed I will! I love making presents.”

Joséphine took a small parcel, carefully done up in brown paper, from the shelf. Very solemnly she deposited it in Térédia's lap. “Look,” she said.

Térédia undid the parcel.

Joséphine gave a little scream of delight. “Isn't it a beauty?” she cried. “So white, so soft, so clean. I have kept it as the very apple of my eye. No, no—I want you to have it. You weren't so prudent as myself. I took two pocket-handkerchiefs with me when I came here. I put one, as you see, carefully away. . . .” Joséphine glanced at her personal effects hanging on the line. “Dear, dear,” she sighed, “I am such a very bad washer-woman.”

"How kind you are!" murmured Térézia.

"Let me feel it," asked the duchess. "Isn't it deliciously white?"

"A perfect miracle," said Joséphine. "Won't you create a sensation to-night at dinner! You will be smart."

"As if she was not always a picture," said Madame d'Aiguillon. "And her clothes will last. I love that shade of blue."

"*Pauvre Ninon*, never mind," consoled Joséphine. "By candle-light dirty white always looks elegant."

"They would not give me time to change. As it happened, I was just coming home from dining with Aunt Gabrielle." The duchess looked mournfully down at her white satin dress, and held out for inspection a pair of small white satin shoes with red heels and little red rosettes, sadly the worse for wear. The dress was trimmed with silver lace, and rosettes of crimson velvet; it was low-necked, and charmingly made—but, alas, after six months' daily wear and tear, what can you expect of white satin, but dirt? Madame d'Aiguillon sighed deeply, and tried to hide her tattered shoes.

"You vain puss," laughed Joséphine, "you ought to be prudent and take care of your clothes. As for me," she declared stoutly, "I love pale blue taffetas, *à jour* (poking her fingers through a new hole). They arrive," she said, "they always arrive in unexpected places." She squeezed Térézia's hand. "You'll last! Is it not so, my friend?" (to the duchess) "Such durable stuff! I'll wager that after six months she'll yet contrive to look distinguished——"

"Six months!" screamed Térézia.

"There, there. I was only joking. Mayn't I have my little fun, if it pleases me? I have been here six months, and I know from personal experience that a joke is quite as nourishing as ox-tail soup, with plenty of port wine in it. When you are hungry—laugh. When you are sad—laugh. When you are cold—laugh. When you are ill—laugh. *Chérie*, I am a famous doctor, and all my fees

I take in kisses." (She kissed Térézia, and, rather than leave Ninon out in the cold, she kissed her also.) "Dear friends, please say that I am a perfectly delightful creature! I am sickening of a dreadful complaint—the want of compliments and pretty speeches and love-making. *Chez nous*, women only exist on love and kisses and sunshine."

Joséphine pulled at her little corkscrew curls, clustering round the nape of her swan neck. Never had a woman a prettier arch to her throat than this exotic lady, nor a prettier voice, nor a prettier instep, nor a prettier lack of assertive talent. She was not clever. (If she had been, Napoleon would never have fallen in love with her, and never have been in the enviable position of crowning her frailty Empress of the French.) But all this is a long, long way off, down the vista of unimaginable years. Joséphine believed in fortune-telling, much as we believe in fairy stories, loving their beauty without crediting their truth. The vigorous beauty of life filled her ears (when her thoughts were not otherwise engaged) as the swell of the sea lapping a shingle beach. She heard it without realizing the call of the deep, the strength of the waves, or the storm asleep in a shell-tinted cloud.

Joséphine stretched out her arm, and, taking her wretched pillow off her wretched bed, she placed it on the floor, at Térézia's feet. "I am tired of sitting on the hard boards," she declared. "Tired of doing nothing." She curled herself up on the pillow with inimitable grace.

Madame d'Aiguillon followed her example and sat down on Térézia's other side. Each lady fondled one of the new-comer's hands. A new-comer was always petted and made much of at Les Carmes.

"Let us tell each other stories to pass the time profitably," said Joséphine dreamily. "Wonderful stories, magical as a starlit night at Martinique."

Madame d'Aiguillon sighed. "You begin," she said.

"I can feel the wind blowing over the bay," said Ma-

dame de Beauharnais. "I can hear the birds singing in the valley, and the ripple of a mountain stream, which is always sweet and fresh.

"The sea is blue, the sky is blue, and the mountains are blue, at Martinique," she continued. "Everything is blue which isn't green or silver or rose or gold. Don't look at that ugly gray wall, but *imagine* the splashes of vivid color! The immense flowers—crimson and violet. The little houses, bright as new paint, with red roofs and green shutters, built on the sloping terraces of a tropical town. The narrow streets descending towards the harbor are thronged with negresses, dressed in their holiday clothes. Some, on the shady side of the street, are carrying baskets of oranges and lemons; others are pushing up the roadside loads of live fish, and bales of scarlet cotton, or offering for sale green palm-leaf fans, and little flutes made out of river grasses. When the night comes home in a glitter of stars, young lovers will find each other in the shadowy gardens, where the white roses, in the moonlight, look like silver bells, and the red carnations and the blue orchids like giant opals, hung on invisible strings. Below the garden the little waves will murmur musically; sea and earth are very close together. Beyond the moonlit town, winds the white ribbon of a road from St. Pierre to Mont Pelée. The most wonderful fairy story on earth is dawn at Martinique, when the blue sea is at full tide, and the laughing voices of the children, just awake. . . . We are all children at heart, when we are happy. How old are you, Térézia? I am ten, and presently I am going to ride up to the Gorge des Oiseaux and breakfast on melons and grapes, at a dear little shanty built of logs, where Aunt Clo' lives. She is a witch, and she tells fortunes. Seriously—she is enormously wise! She has told me I am to be married twice (poor dear Alexandre!) and that my fortune will be finer than that of a real live queen! What do you say to such a piece of astounding good luck? When I am not dreaming of Martinique—blessed island!—I greatly fancy

myself as a lovely empress, in perfectly splendid robes—an extravagant, popular empress, with all the world at her feet.” She stretched out her arms dramatically.

“And the emperor?” laughed Ninon.

“Darling, he is out of the picture. He is a man, anyway, and he loves me to distraction——”

“And you return his love?”

Joséphine made a delightful little grimace.

“It depends. Do emperors want loving? I don’t know, and I don’t care. Anyhow, my train is real—yards and yards of silk velvet, embroidered all over with crowns, and lined with miniver. Ninon, Térézia, you shall carry my train! Remember, you have my solemn promise.”

“Thank you,” said Ninon.

“Thank you” chimed in Térézia (not quite so gratefully).

Each lady considered her own prospects. Térézia was the first to break the silence, and chase an exquisite radiance from the duchess’s tender blue eyes. (Ninon was dreaming that she was the queen of her own nursery. You see, somewhere—pray God in safety—she had her darling Ninette and Charlemagne-Marie; Ninette was four years old, and Charlemagne would be two on May Day.)

“Can one dream here?” asked Térézia, laughing hysterically.

“Dream!” cried the startled Joséphine, watching a flock of sea-gulls rise from the coral reef.

“Dream!” cried Ninon, hugging her children to her aching heart.

Térézia smiled. Perhaps it was not so absurd to fancy things.

“Dream!” said Madame d’Aiguillon. “Why, we do nothing else. We are dreaming all day long, and all night long. We wake to dreams, which we have gathered during the night—such beautiful dreams. We live in our dreams——”

“Of the past?” asked Térézia.

“And of the future,” said Joséphine.

"We make our plans—such sensible plans!" said the duchess, gaily. "We buy new chemises, dazzling white; and new stockings—crowds of them, piles of them, and if we discover a hole anywhere, a tiny, infinitesimal hole, we throw them away at once! We creep into enchanting beds. My bed is the very acme of comfort—all hung in a delicate shade of rose silk and snowy lace with great downy, sweet-scented pillows and mountains of soft mattresses. The sheets are of the finest linen, and the blankets—the blankets are exquisite, soft, warm, delicious."

"That is enough," said Joséphine, stroking Ninon's yellow curls. "We can realize your bed, *m'amie*, without any further embroidery. If you added so much as a warming-pan you would overdo it."

Térézia kissed Ninon's hand.

"My bed is of course," said Joséphine, with her grandest air, "a very royal one. All gilding and carving and width and majesty. It is supplied with heavy curtains—gold brocade, I think. And there is a very marvelous counterpane which has taken three years to complete——"

"I couldn't wait so long," said Térézia.

"Silly child! It is an antique which has never been used. It has been laid by on purpose—there is nothing extraordinary which hasn't its purpose—in a cedar chest, with layers of spices and rose-leaves, for more than a hundred solid years. On second thoughts, I'll have it wadded thickly with down—ciderdown. Térézia, you can't think how we suffered from cold this cruel winter. Many times I was convinced I would shiver and shiver until I died, sobbing in the arms of Ninon. Ninon tried to be warm, but she couldn't. It was no use even pretending—so we sat up in bed and cried. One night—do you remember, Ninon?—two rats came out of their holes and looked at us. We could see their eyes quite well in the darkness. We left off crying to scream. Presently I fell asleep envying the silly, greedy rats—one night they ate *all* the soap!—for their warm coats. Envy always makes me hot—so you see, even a sin isn't lacking in grace.

. . . Where was I? In bed, of course! I'll never want to get up. When my *femme de chambre* brings me my morning chocolate—set out on a silver tray, with a plate of saffron rolls dusted with sugar and chopped almonds—and, yes, a few currants—I'll only shake my sleepy head at her, and murmur—"Go away, please. Come again another day." She will drop a deep curtsy—"Madame! I won't even notice her as she trips out of the great white doors, in a flutter of annoyance and pink ribbons."

Ninon shifted her position on the straw pallet and displayed her little foot in its tattered slipper.

"What a treat it will be," she said, "to be lazy and warm. I am nearly always cold here. I expect I have got a poor circulation. My mother always said I would live to regret my dislike of porridge." Ninon sighed. "I wonder, if I'd eaten it as a child, whether my prudence would have kept me warm now?"

"Poor darling," murmured Térézia, noticing the little duchess's wan cheeks. "We won't stand it a moment longer than we can help. I have influential friends in the outside world. When men fail, women must act. I wish my voice could pierce these thick walls, and Robespierre's power. We'll send him packing to the guillotine, and every mother's heart in France will commend him to the devil. He is at the back of all this misery."

Joséphine jumped to her feet. "Vive l'Espoir!" she called. "Vive l'Espoir! Who can I kiss? I must kiss someone."

"Let's dance, it will keep us warm," said Térézia. Her eyes were shining; her cheeks flushed; her lips trembling. She looked like a beautiful fury. Madame d'Aiguillon looked only like a tired young girl, in need of a set of new clothes and a good supper.

When presently the cell door opened cautiously, the ladies were busy at the finishing touches of their evening toilet. Joséphine was always late for the dinner call, and the turnkeys, as a rule, shuffled her in front of them,

regardless of whether she was in her stays and petticoat, or less. Sometimes they made vile jests on her appearance.

To-night the ladies were very nearly ready, and fortune favored them. They turned and faced the door, each face alight with eagerness. Sometimes "darling Joseph" summoned them downstairs. Joseph never came empty-handed. If he had nothing else to give them, he'd bring them a piece of news, a consoling speech, or a merry word.

{ "Joseph!"
{ "Joseph!"
{ "Joseph!"

All three spoke together.

He looked a very different person from the fine gentleman who had forced his presence (if you remember) on Térézia Carrabus, the evening of her unlucky arrival in Paris.

Here he stood with his back to the door (which he presently shut carefully), a hideous figure of depravity, wickedness and patriotism. (A pure disguise, of course, for his Christian intentions.) A red patch, like blood, disfigured his left cheek. His hair was combed as the wind combs a forsaken nest. His clothes were unutterable; his jack-boots steeped in mire—evil-smelling—his grimy hands held a grimy lantern. His eyes beamed lovingly. His bow was that of a perfect gentleman.

Followed by the fascinated gaze of three female worshipers, he took out of his pocket a fairly large parcel, a very small letter, and a loaf of bread, which he offered to the ladies.

The ladies fingered the bread and sniffed at it, hardly believing their senses.

"It is white," they said.

"It is warm," they said.

"It is delicious," they said.

"We will leave the parcel until later. Too much happiness might kill us," said the practical duchess.

"*Citoyen*," said Joséphine, earnestly, looking at the frightful man opposite her, "God will reward you."

"Forgive my appearance ladies. But here we must all act, and dress up to the part of patriots, if we are to be trusted. In other words, dirt, brutality and insolence—all make good marks. I am anxious to stand well with the prison authorities."

Térézia did not listen to Joseph's explanations. She was busy reading the letter he had given to her. It was from Tallien.

She stood close to the barred window; her hands trembling, her head swimming.

It was a coward's letter, a liar's letter.

Down the passage the slamming of doors, and the vulgar voices of the jailers, told the ladies that they would get no dinner if they didn't hurry.

Térézia put her letter in her pocket; she bit her lips and looked mulish. "I have done my best to save you, darling," he wrote (gushing at much length). . . . "Be careful. Better not write. . . ." Térézia made up her mind she would write to Tallien directly after dinner—a good, strong letter. She had prudently smuggled into prison a sufficiency of paper and ink.

She looked at Joseph. He would see to the safe delivery of her message. He was in the plot, a rough plan of action, as yet immature, but extremely suggestive of brilliant results, always supposing Tallien would act in self-defence. She would efface herself and emphasize his personal danger. Even a mongrel leaps to bravery in his hour of need. *Tallien would act!*

"Joseph! Are you there?"

A pasty-faced warder looked in at Cell 306. He carried on his shoulder a narrow and extremely uninviting-looking mattress; in places it was thin as an empty bag—in others lumpy as a sack of potatoes.

This shock-headed fellow pushed rudely past the ladies and, without another word (except a lascivious curse), he seized their poor bedding, rolled it in a bundle on his

shoulders, and flung down the deplorable substitute on the floor.

"*Citoyen*," said Joséphine proudly, "what are you doing? We will keep our own dirt, if you please."

"Can't be done. You are only two in here to-night. Got a party of five arrived this afternoon, and they'll have to have the larger bed. None of your bluff, Joseph, and mind your own business."

Joseph thought fit to let the young man have his own way. He very slowly wiped a spot of grease off his lantern.

The three ladies looked at each other.

CHAPTER XL

JOSÉPHINE held up her petticoats and tripped down the winding staircase with such haste that Térézia and Ninon had quite a difficulty in keeping up with her. The stairs were very steep, very dark, and very dirty. Joséphine always took them at a rush, holding her precious handkerchief to her nose. She always entered the gloomy semi-darkness of the dining-hall with some little remark to the effect that she was either suffocating, or being poisoned, or dying of fright. "B-rrr! the smells to-night, *citoyennes!* All the rats of Les Carmes are waiting outside for tit-bits. Yet I always say I'd rather meet a hundred live rats than ten dead ones, any day."

Joséphine was popular. Her gaiety was infectious. All her friends would crowd around her. "Amuse us, *chérie,*" they'd say. "For ten very long hours we haven't laughed." Joséphine would shake her head. "And I haven't ceased to laugh for ten minutes! Life is full of amusement," she'd say. Madame de Beauharnais' unquenchable spirits were a standing joke at Les Carmes. People trembled lest her name should appear on the list. They couldn't afford to lose her, nor her wonderful audacity. Fancy played with Terror!

They were all playing a game, a game of good manners, and, above all, a game of ignoring unpleasant facts. Otherwise a great many of these high-born delicate women would have cheated the guillotine. They would have succumbed to bad food, bad air, and bad language. As it was, they preferred to give life every chance, ignoring the insolence of their warders, and their many privations. There is no plant of such vigorous growth as human hope. Even the Lists did not appal them. They could always die—as aristocrats. (They did die splendidly.) God was their very good friend.

Joséphine rarely expounded her theories on death—she much preferred to dwell on life. Yet, if the subject came uppermost, she always evinced proper contempt for the *canaille*. When her dearest friends stood up to face their last ordeal, she invariably clapped her little hands—probably quite soundlessly—as an encouragement.

“Good-bye,” she’d say—her eyes very bright. “When you arrive, give my love to So-and-so.” (So-and-so having left their select company maybe a week or two ago—maybe yesterday. In this exquisite stagnation no one remembered dates.)

Madame de Beauharnais’ lively society was much in request. “Madame, have the goodness to come over here—my sister is greatly depressed this evening. She cried all last night. We did all we could to comfort her, but she only cried. . . .”

And away Joséphine would rush, maybe leaving her dinner to get cold in her hurry to comfort a sufferer.

This evening she was the centre of interest to a little coterie who had selected as their reception-room the left-hand corner of the big room. The women sat very close together on a plank, shiftily placed on two trestles, their men-folk standing up behind them against the horrible wall, which here met the sloping ceiling at a very low angle. In fact, M. le marquis de Vielcoque—who stood six feet three in his stockings—leaned his unpowdered head against an ancient cross-beam, mouldy with age, and vermin as he talked with Térézia and his cousin, Ninon d’Aiguillon.

The duchess drooped her pretty head and stirred, with a rough wooden spoon, the contents of her tin basin.

“I am not hungry to-night,” she said.

There was a very poor light in the great hall, but the tall marquis could quite distinctly see that his cousin was not looking herself. She was strangely flushed, and he remembered, when he had kissed her hand, how hot it had felt to his lips.

“You are not sickening for measles, or anything,

Ninon?" he asked quite sternly. He was genuinely fond of Ninon, but she was a silly little girl for all that.

The duchess sighed. "Oh, no, Victor. I have had them. I think I caught cold yesterday, maybe in the garden."

He looked at her bare shoulders. "You might have borrowed a cloak."

"I might, but I didn't," she returned meekly.

Once a week the prisoners were taken out, in batches of a hundred, and exercised in the yard, a small open space surrounded by the menacing walls of the old prison, and not of a particularly lively aspect. The air, though comparatively fresh, was still very tainted. A slaughter-house stood close by, and a tannery, whose very name made the aristocratic ladies feel uncomfortable, where operations were carried on in a gloomy building, the chimneys of which could be seen, taking up an unfair proportion of the visible blue sky. Ninon had once been out on a winter night when the snow had covered the filthy yard, a fresh, clear, cold winter night. As an attractive jest the jailers in charge had aroused some of the prisoners, and marched them out in the middle of the night. From the guard-house, behind a handsome fire of logs, the men had watched the ill-clad "denounced" parade the exercise-ground, marching after each other in regulation single file . . . ten times forwards—right about turn, ten times backwards . . . this was to prevent giddiness. The court was circular, and so high were the walls it resembled an enormous funnel. Above was the starlit sky. It had been a miraculous night. All the prisoners had been visibly delighted by this unusual favor. The ribald laughter of the jailers died away, as their gorgeous fire, leaping less high, smouldered down to glowing cinders. Their jest had miscarried. Why, the devil! the accursed aristocrats were pleased, whereas they ought to have shuddered, if they had been at all natural! Sulkily the head jailer—our friend, Mr. Dignity—sounded his horn. In five minutes the stars, shining over *Les Carnes*, were left without a single worshiper.

Ninon remembered that night's exceeding beauty, though her ridiculous white satin shoes came home, to Cell 306, none the better for an hour's tramp in the snow-slush.

Térézia Carrabus, in all the glory of her "sensible" dress and her fresh coloring, looked quite vulgar beside Ninon. If M. le marquis had been less of a gentleman and more of a poet, he would certainly, in a peevish spirit of jealousy (as we have said, he was very fond of the little Ninon), have likened her to an opulent cabbage rose flaunting in the same bowl as a handful of pale lilies. The marquis was a gentleman, but not a poet. He could not help admiring Térézia's appearance. The solid dignity of her dress and the vivid beauty of her healthy face impressed him very favorably. She was an amazing picture of unconquerable vitality. . . . Her name could never stand on the List. Never!

"Monsieur?"

"Madame?"

Térézia held out her tin basin, the marquis bowed, took it from her hands and walked across the unutterable floor, placing the bowl on a tray heaped with similar bowls, battered, dirty, and all more or less untouched.

There were occasions when no one had any appetite at Les Carmes. Rabbit soup was a questionable dish. What were the ingredients? It wasn't etiquette to ask questions at Les Carmes—except, of course, queries which politeness exacted. "Have you slept well, madame?" "I hope, monsieur, your cold is better?" "You will repeat that delightful song?" "Mademoiselle, how do you manage to look so charming?" "And you, madame, by what miracle of grace——" They were hardly questions, but dear old platitudes which never grow stale. A kind thought, a kind compliment, a kind smile—be they ever so hollow—are worth a lexicon of honest opinion not so pleasantly framed.

Nothing was allowed to mar the dinner hour. In that strange, rather pathetic assembly everyone seemed, if not

happy, at least lazily content. (Every woman present was more or less thankful for the blessed darkness.)

Joséphine spread out her tattered skirts—sitting at the further end of the crowded bench—as if they had been very superior garments. Her gay voice, musical as a bell, was easily distinguishable above the whispers of the general company. She faced a dim lantern, standing on the soiled table, at her right. Her pale, mobile face looked delicate as a cameo—a little knot of black velvet at her throat; her russet hair drawn back from her forehead, partly hiding her ears. Her beautiful eyes were warm with sympathy and attention; she was listening to one of old Madame de Rochenoire's very old stories. Joséphine had heard it many times before, but her interest never failed. She held the old lady's fragile hand in a friendly grasp.

"Really!" said Joséphine. "How astonishing! . . ."

A bell clanged sombrely.

An indefinable change came over that well-trained assembly. If possible, the ladies drew a little closer to each other. The men stood at attention. Every eye was turned towards the barred doors. Fate was standing outside. Fate in the hideous shape of a callous man, who carried an official list in his hand. Sometimes it was shorter—sometimes longer. When he had read it he marched out, passive as a malignant shadow. Sometimes he blew out the lantern he carried suspended on his chest by a leather trap—sometimes he forgot.

He marched out behind a selected number of victims. Each had answered to his or her name. Each had taken an affectionate if necessarily short farewell of their nearest and dearest, and bowed gracefully to the general company.

It was all very orderly, very formal, very heartbreaking. Yet not a murmur, not a protest, scarcely a tear. . . .

When all had passed beyond, the great door shut.

The new-comer took up his position, in front of the table which stretched across one end of the room.

The master-cook, who had ladled out his appetizing soup, and who had only laughed when the plates came back practically untasted, rapped his shining carving-knife on the splashed boards, and laughed until the tears poured down his sooty, sweating cheeks.

He always waited for the reading of the Lists. He was rather new to the place—and, so far, he had betted rather successfully on the evening's selections. He gave Joseph a sly glance. Joseph always lost his money.

Joseph returned his wink in a breezy, familiar style. In public Joseph earned his good marks with those in authority at quite an alarming rate. He would tickle the warders' gross humor by a display of wit still grosser. He would cap their insults by blasphemy, laugh in the ladies faces, snap his fingers under the very noses of the gentlemen, blunder upon sacred confidences.

Sometimes, as a slight reward for such rollicking fun, Joseph was allowed to read the List.

The room was always intensely quiet when Joseph—after a preliminary word or two—began to read. He did it so inimitably. The warders would nudge each other and shrug their shoulders; the prisoners would watch his depraved countenance with great, startled, hopeful eyes. He was a shocking bad hand at deciphering writing. One might almost imagine, to cover his ignorance, he introduced fancy names—"Citoyen Grasshopper! Who answers to the name of Citoyen Cockrobin Grasshopper?" No one. There was not such a name on that particular night at least at Les Carmes. So Joseph erased the name off the fatal list. "Died of fever," he said casually. No one laughed. Then he would call maybe for Mrs. Chair-back, Mr. Dishcover, Miss Mittens and Miss Ribbon-tie—or any other fantastic combination of empty sound. . . . No one laughed. The ladies might breathe a shade deeper, and their eyes might glow with tears or laughter—who knows? (Anyhow, they are closely related.)

He'd do brilliantly for a time, but even Joseph could not save them all. Now and again his summons was quickly

answered. "Citoyen, ci-devant comte Henri de Dédai-geux!" And immediately some elegant gentleman would stand clear of the little crowd, and answer to his name with calm politeness.

Joseph would ask him to join his fellow-prisoners, who were to be brought up for their trial on the following morning.

To-night Joseph was not allowed any privileges. The man who held the sheet of stiff parchment had refused to part with it. "None of your horse-play," he said roughly—as Joseph offered to relieve him of his trouble.

It seemed as if a tinge of melancholy fell on the company. Even one or two of the warders spat angrily on the floor. "It is getting beyond a joke," one big man murmured audibly. "Blast my tongue, but I'm sick to death of blood."

The aristocrats, even though hope burned very low in their hearts, smiled gently.

The man read out a goodly number of names—some of them very distinguished. The little group, gathering by the great door, seemed to expand at an alarming rate.

"Quicker there!" said the surly official. "I'm in a hurry to-night."

"*Au revoir*, madame," said the tall marquis, bowing to Térézia. "I've been charmed to make your acquaintance."

Térézia held out her hand. "*Au revoir*, monsieur," she said, dully. Surely it was all a hideous dream?

Ninon, who had risen, was looking up at her handsome cousin in a bewildered manner. She had a thousand messages to give him, only she couldn't remember them.

"Take care of yourself," he said, turning towards her. "My love to the babies. I promised Ninette a doll—get her one, will you? And this little ring, will you wear it, Ninon, sometimes?"

"Thank you very much," said Ninon, slipping the marquis's ring on her finger.

"Citoyenne, yeuve Roche-noire!"

Joséphine helped the old lady to rise, and kissed her with great tenderness.

"*Au revoir*, madame. Here is your scarf. A thousand thanks for all your kindness."

"Citoyenne, ci-devant duchesse Ninon d'Aiguillon!"

"Wait a moment, Victor," called the little duchess. "We are going out together. . . . Don't cry, Térézia. Take care of Joséphine. . . ."

Térézia rushed forward tall and tragic. "It's a mistake," she called loudly—"a hideous mistake!"

Joseph, who had been looking over his *confrère's* shoulder, snatched roughly at the list.

"Dunder-headed ass!" he said, savagely. "Where are your spectacles? Can't you read properly? I'll report you for inattention to duty. They'll snap your head off like a dry twig—you bloody fool!"

The man glared.

"Read for yourself! I'll denounce you to-morrow for complicity in crime!"

Joseph bawled without the least hesitation:

"'Citoyenne, ci-devant *dowager* duchesse d'Aiguillon!' Criminal! Would you condemn a suspected woman rather than own up that you didn't go to school?"

The master-cook gaped. He had lost five francs. "There's some mischief at the bottom of this," he said.

"It is all one to me," said the turnkey surlily, with a frightful oath. "Have it your own way. Come on, you skittish dowager!"

Here a pock-marked jailer stepped forward.

"Cell 162. She is dead," he said. "Buried last week."

Joséphine clapped her little hands.

CHAPTER XLI

THE old prisons of Paris have long since passed into the annals of ugly tradition. Les Carmes, La Force, Le Temple, not to mention the historic Bastille, which the dawn of the Revolution sacrificed to the spirit of revolt,—all have been razed to the ground.

Many times did Robespierre regret the destruction of the Bastille. He could have filled it many times over. Alas, in June, 1794, Paris was a hot-bed of vice, sedition, and terrible menace to the delicate, new-born State—freshly calendared, freshly named, nursed by a demi-god in blue clothes.

It was quite difficult to find accommodation for these wicked people. Sex was no hindrance to unspeakable plotting. Youth was no bar to soiled lips, infamous with intolerable language. Quite young girls, well-brought-up girls, girls who ought to have known better, had been heard (and very properly denounced) pitying a class which had gone under—a class which no longer existed in France! Only their shadow remained, to cast, as it were, a golden halo at the feet of Robespierre. In his own imagination he towered over the Jacobins as a full moon illumines the night.

In that blessed month of June, Robespierre reached the summit of his ambition. Fear and love, joining hands, worshiped him. Fear controlled love—though he, tenderly, gave precedence to love.

In the happy month of June Robespierre was often troubled by insomnia. He was continually fighting shadows. They crept around his narrow bed, and gathered around the night-lamp emitting dim pink lights through a ruby globe. The lamp was suspended to the

ceiling of the alcove by thin gilt chains and hung directly over his head. At most times the tinted light fell on his inquiring face.

From sleep he did not hope for forgetfulness. Sleep visited him in the watches of dreams, tainted as the lives of those wicked people he was trying to exterminate.

Many of the dead visited him under the ruby lamp (which burnt until daylight), and scoffed at him. He could hear them laugh and jeer, and treat him with ignominy. "You man!" they said. "You little coward-man! You are not a god! Sky-blue clothes don't transfigure guilty flesh into divinity! In sin you were born, in sin you will die. . . ."

And the voices of the mocking dead (so recently alive) pricked him as the touch of steel. He would wake and stare beyond the ruby lamp—in a cold sweat of terror—he had meant well! He had meant to cleanse France! To leave a white corner on earth, furnished with great love and greater discernment. . . . If your right hand offends you, cut it off! It was a sound doctrine. In the old days the prophets had spoken, when Jove roamed the earth in flames of celestial fire. . . . Jehovah, before him, had wiped the world clean of ancient abominations. . . .

Robespierre would sit up in bed—his crumpled sheets horridly damp—his nightshirt open on his hairy chest—his glittering eyes filled with the madness of creation. . . .

"God of Israel!" he would cry. "I am Thy chosen instrument! I will purify France! Love me, God! for love is good!"

So he babbled, drunk with achievement and swollen with pride. He was convinced that in his little ague-stricken frame true power and greatness dwelt. From regenerated France his mind, circling the living world, leaped in one bound to a regenerated earth. He was greater than Alexander, greater than Cæsar, greater than Charlemagne. . . . He had overthrown monarchy and raised the people to their rightful status. He saw the surface of his world neatly parceled into little holdings of equal value, and

destitution and hunger and slavery vanishing before justice, as night mists vanish before the morning sun. . . .

Yet the dead laughed aloud. They would circle round his narrow bed and laugh. He recognized grinning faces which once had been pleasant faces—faces of friends denounced; faces of enemies traduced; faces of utter strangers, done to death—an astonishing gathering of mocking spirits, all of whom he had hounded out of life, to satisfy his own lustful policy.

Robespierre would gnash his teeth in impotent rage, and mutter words.

“The innocent shall suffer for the guilty unto the third and fourth generation.”

A smile would light his weary eyes. He was justified in his actions, more than justified!

Once, as in a dream dimly, he saw an ornate, stately carriage, swung on high springs, rolling along the king's high-road, furnished with liveried servants and richly caparisoned horses. There were ten horses and ten servants ministering to the pride of a feeble peer of France. He remembered the popinjay inside his swinging carriage, swaying with the easy springs as the great wheels rolled over an obstruction on the public road. The horses had floundered into a group of peasant children—knocking some over, killing others. Neither horses, nor flunkeys, nor lord had been inconvenienced by the incident.

“Revenge!” he'd cried, “unto the third and fourth generation!”

He would twist his blistered tongue over his cracked lips and howl at the impotent shadows. Dawn was ever an immense distance off. He would choke with the terror he had evoked. . . . It struck him with hideous certainty that the people's condition, on the whole, had not materially improved. Hunger still stalked in Paris, precisely as it had done in the old days prior to the revolution. And unrest. And thanklessness. And bitter envy. And sorrow. . . . Yet he had touched the heart of Hope.

. . . His conscience was as clear as an untainted brook. . . .

On this comfortable reflection, he would fall asleep to be visited by dreams.

It was on the following Monday, *Décadi*, 20th *Prairial* (8th June, old style), that *Citoyen Tallien* was disturbed, just as he was going to the executions, by an unwelcome visit from *Joseph*.

He looked at his big gold watch and rattled all the multitude of seals and ornaments hanging to the massive gold chain, in a peevish spirit of impatience at this untimely interruption to his agreeable duties. *Joseph* was a good fellow, no doubt, and brave, and all that, but he was apt to worry *Tallien*. The very sight of this man—discreetness itself—made him realize uncomfortably—the predicament of his mistress. Of course it was not agreeable for her (poor darling) to be shut up at *Les Carmes*, in daily expectation of her trial and subsequent execution. It was a miracle she was still alive, considering *Robespierre's* business-like methods. As a matter of fact, *Tallien* had had to walk very circumspectly to avert suspicion falling on himself. He had let the weeks slip past—at heart furiously angry at *Térédia's* imprisonment, but outwardly complacently “just.”

To be just is always a very excellent quality in a man, and it was particularly so in *Prairial*, 1794.

“I’ll see him,” said *Tallien*, to his servant *Pierre*—a discreet person.

“Very good, *citoyen*.”

The man placed *Tallien's* silver-braided hat and a pair of yellow chamois gloves (old-fashioned skins) on his dressing-table.

At that moment the buhl clock on the mantelpiece struck half-past ten.

Tallien yawned, flicked out the folds of a clean linen handkerchief and blew his nose.

He was feeling tired after yesterday’s orgy. It had

been a tawdry show, on the whole, and, as the Supreme Being, Robespierre (for all his fine clothes) had struck a false note, the statue of Wisdom, in spite of its monstrous size, had looked unconvincing and ludicrous. Even the fireworks had refused to go off. There had been a crowd, certainly, a yelling, excited, shabby crowd, but the Supreme Being had not attracted the best people to his initial birthday party. Truth to tell, he had cut a supremely ridiculous figure.

Tallien yawned again. He could only spare Joseph a moment. The guillotine had been shifted from the Place de la Révolution to the suburbs of Saint Antoine, to please the Republic—the finicky Republic which no longer loved the sight of tumbrils in the elegant quarters of the city.

Robespierre, instead of cutting off the heads of these sensitive plants, quietly gave in to them. For the last month or so the guillotine had rolled round Paris like a threshing machine traveling from farm to farm. It was tiresome for the sightseers, sometimes necessitating long journeys, and always hindering operations. There were over twelve thousand prisoners in Paris waiting their turn.

Tallien felt aggrieved and cross, and, yes, nervous. The Supreme Being had treated him with scant courtesy last night. What an intolerable little bounder he was, with his jargon of godship and his painted face and his glib tongue, coated with lies!

“My dear Joseph,” said Tallien, “shut the door, please. I hate draughts. Besides, one can’t be too careful. Be thankful you escaped that ridiculous exhibition last night. Robespierre is the biggest fool in Paris—and the most careful.”

Joseph came over to Tallien and looked at him earnestly.

“What are you staring at?” asked that worthy fretfully.

“I was wondering how long you intend to sit still with your hands folded.”

Tallien drummed his fingers on the table. “Sit down.”

Joseph accepted his invitation. "You have got the chance of doing a big thing."

"It is too risky."

"It is quite worth your while."

"My dear fellow, ten per cent. of the people howling round Robespierre last night still believed in him."

"Denounce him."

Tallien's upper lip quivered. His big eyes stared at Joseph's clean face and clean coat without noticing the extraordinary change in his appearance.

The fact was that Joseph was on his way to see his mother, if you remember the old lady who didn't believe in the Revolution—and consequently he had put on his best clothes and his most guileless manner. His mother would kiss him, and ask after his health, his work and his amusements, and Joseph would, of course, satisfy her on every point. Then they would talk of his soldier brother, who served under General Bonaparte. And he would drink three cups of his mother's excellent coffee. . . . Joseph wondered if her roses were doing well. He felt in his pocket to reassure himself that he had not forgotten a packet of Essler's noted fly-killer, which his mother, on his last visit, had particularly requested him to bring her. She had heard excellent reports about this preparation, and had said that she would like to give it a trial if it wasn't too expensive. Joseph had assured her it was quite cheap. And his mother had answered him, smiling at him from her comfortable arm-chair, that she for her part liked to keep pace with the times.

"It is a competitive age," she had observed, "such that I, in my little corner, am seriously aware of it." She was alluding to the suicidal price of groceries. . . .

Tallien looked at his elegant boots with moody distaste.

"Denounce! Denounce!" he said. "All very well for you to talk! It is very easy to bell the cat, in the abstract. A charming proposition!"

"It is more than charming. Brace yourself together, man. There are more than twelve thousand——"

"Stuff and nonsense! Who cares a damn for those beastly whining prisoners?—a jumble lot; some of them the very dregs of Paris."

"Citoyenne Carrabus among them. By the way, she seems annoyed at your dilatory behavior."

"She never possessed a shred of patience."

"I wonder."

"Well, of course, I own she is suffering hardships at present, and bearing them very well, too. Anyhow, she has the assurance of my love and consideration."

"Yes."

"Love is everything to a woman." Tallien smiled complacently. "She is, on the whole, a lucky little woman. How is she looking?"

"Pale."

"Does she keep up her spirits?"

"Her indignation against you acts very beneficially."

"She is very beautiful. You know, I saved her life at Bordeaux——"

"Won't help her in this case——"

"My dear Joseph, I intend to help her. Haven't I risked a great deal in writing to her? Seriously, I am very attached to the *citoyenne*. There are heaps of pretty women in Paris, but no one has Térézia's charm. The day they kill her I shall go mad, raving mad!"

"A monkey can only climb to the top of the tree, and climb down again—or fall. One monkey fell yesterday."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tallien. "I *rather* thought he overdid it myself. Those disgustin' speeches, and his flapping arms—like windmills—and his screechin' laughter. I tell you he roared like a mad bull!"

Tallien rose and stalked about the room. Then he turned and faced Joseph.

"If I succeed I expect a handsome reward," he said.

"An easy conscience, sir, and the gratitude——"

"Fiddlesticks!"

"If you prefer the substance to the shadow, let's say a dictatorship. Power in the right hand——"

Tallien opened his mouth wide.

"There is something very noble in self-sacrifice," he said.

Joseph lowered his voice.

"Any delay is criminal."

"Be assured of my deepest sympathy for all concerned."

"Thank you, sir. I'll pass round the word at Les Carmes. The lists get longer every night. Fever rages. Many cases of madness, not to mention overcrowding. Also the sanitary conditions might be improved, not to mention the food."

Tallien approached his visitor.

"I sent her chocolates last week. I am always getting a letter through. Tell her," he whispered, "Tallien will do his duty."

"Every minute counts."

"Next week Robespierre lays his new legislative bill before the House. It'll be the finishing touch as far as his popularity is concerned. We like to deal with men, not gods. As a god he is a mistake. A little human god who fancies himself celestial. It can't be done, sir. It is bad taste, damned bad taste."

Tallien had worked himself up into a very agreeable frame of mind. He walked over jauntily to his dressing-table, laden with different perfumes and cosmetics; selecting a bottle of his favorite carnation scent he sprayed his person liberally.

"Delicious," he murmured, "delicious."

"Think it over."

"'Pon my word, it is never out of my mind."

"You're a brave man, Tallien."

"Thank you, sir. By the way have you heard the latest proof of our dear god's dwindling courage?"

"Yes—no. It does not interest me."

"Don't be so unkind! Two nights ago he took supper with the Delaines. Report has it that he was engaged to Mlle. Rosalie—a charming young girl. He drank more than was good for him. He talked in a gay confidential

tone. He kissed them all round—all the family were present. The following morning *ce cher* Robespierre regretted his geniality. What had he said? It worried him. Guess what he did."

Joseph looked at his watch. "I can't conceive," he said indifferently.

"He denounced the whole family, had 'em brought up for trial that very same morning, and executed within twenty-four hours."

"Splendid!"

"Hard luck on old friends, eh?"

"Extremely lucky for us. Just you let that little story circulate."

Tallien rubbed his hands joyfully. "He hasn't a leg to stand on."

"Any fool could knock him down," said Joseph. "Think it over, valiant sir!" His eyes were lazily insolent. "I must be going. I have got an important appointment at eleven sharp. You won't forget this evening?"

"No," said Tallien. "I won't forget, but I don't half like it. It is a big risk."

"Terrific."

"Wait a minute, Joseph. Does she expect me?"

"Women are fools, you know, especially women in love——"

Tallien smiled engagingly. "I'll come," he said. "Tell her I won't disappoint her. Joseph—here, wait a moment—I love that woman. I'd do any mortal thing to please her."

Joseph had vanished. In his place, on the polished table he had left a small parcel, wrapped in soiled newspaper and tied with grayish tape.

Tallien first bit his nails, and then he slowly untied the parcel—holding it at a safe distance. By some queer jugglery of thought he remembered Cleopatra and her famous asps. Prudence seldom poisons a man. Suspicion was rife in Paris, and Tallien was the soul of precaution.

He snapped open the lid of an oblong leather case lined with faded green velvet. It contained neither asp nor scorpion, but a pretty little toy dagger with a chased gold handle coquettishly tied with a knot of pink ribbon. Tallien remembered vaguely having seen it in Térézia's hands, her jewel-laden, soft white hands. The thought put him in a pensive mood. . . . She was a very charming woman, passionate and warm, loving (at times) and sensible of his virtues . . . he'd like to reward her.

He gently took out the dagger and passed the bright steel blade smoothly over his cheek.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish. What did she take him for? . . . He was not a hired assassin—no, no! but a prudent, careful young man.

In moving the dagger he discovered that the case contained a scrap of paper. He unfolded it and read the following message penned by Térézia: "*Act, act! For God's sake, act! Térézia.*"

He shivered—half in pleasure, half in fear. What an audacious darling. A wicked little murderess—eh? Ha-ha!

Even in his own ears his laugh sounded insincere. He passed his hand over his lips and looked cautiously about him. Pierre—his man—was very inquisitive. Best to say nothing. Best to lock up that foolish little toy (which he promptly did). The letter he slipped into his pocket.

He stopped before the long mirror—we have said that his rooms were luxuriously furnished—to admire his elegant appearance. He was dressed in the height of fashion. His coat was excessively short-waisted—his breeches very tight-fitting, his collar cut with immense lapels, his tie a length of old lace finished with a diamond pin, said to have belonged to his late majesty. Tallien wore it out of sentiment.

He looked around his pleasant room, rather too luxurious, maybe, for a man, rather over-scented, but refreshingly clean. Tallien seldom spat, and he never invited his dear friend Robespierre into his dressing-room.

How enchanting (he thought) Térézia would look lying

on his big sofa in one of her semi-transparent morning robes. Her presence in some subtle manner filled the big room. He seemed to feel the insistent pressure of her soft arms, to feel her delicate breath—which rivaled his carnation scent—to see her eyes like twin stars shining, clear, entreating. . . .

He pulled out her note from his pocket, spread it open on the table, and hungrily moved his hot lips over the written words.

A discreet knock on the door awoke him from his trance.

"It is past eleven, *citoyen*," said his servant.

Tallien snatched his hat from Pierre's hand, and rushed down the stairs into his waiting cab.

CHAPTER XLII

IN the leafy month of June fever ravaged the prisons. There was a strange glitter in the women's eyes; their cheeks were flushed when they met at meals, kissed and whispered together. Even Joséphine forgot her pressing flirtations in the glow of greater matters. If! If! If!

The impossible sometimes happens.

Down the long passages of Les Carmes, filled to overflowing by human suffering—how many lives had not glided that way into the unseen?—there blew a current, fresh as a breeze from the salt sea-coast, intoxicating the prisoners. It fanned their feverish cheeks, spurring them to wild gaiety.

See you, the Revolution was tottering to its fall!

Térézia walked through the crowded prison like a torch-bearer. Her shining light lit on sad faces, on old faces, on young faces; faces seamed by illness, faces blotched by indifference; loving faces, cruel faces, beloved faces. . . . It was a very great company.

On this particular night—when surely midsummer elves were gamboling in some lonely woodland glen—the inmates of Cell 306 were particularly wide awake and in the best of good spirits. On the window ledge, in the neck of a bottle, burned a precious stump of candle. A grand illumination, ladies, in honor of a very important rendezvous! So much depended on the successful issue of Térézia's interview with Tallien. For months they'd talked of little else. Térézia was confident of victory. Joséphine and Ninon had complete faith in their beautiful cell-mate.

"Nothing can move her from her purpose," they declared to their intimates. "She is exquisite."

The intimates would cordially agree with the gentle

Madame de Beauharnais (as yet unaware of her widowhood). Térézia was indeed the golden butterfly of dull prison routine. Before her magic glance secret doors opened, "dangerous" letters had a way of reaching her with their seals unbroken. In Cell 306 there was a priceless collection of Deputy Tallien's ill-spelled missives written on the thick, strongly-scented note-paper he affected, signed in cypher. As Térézia said, he was the soul of precaution.

"Beloved," said Joséphine, "there is a limit to everything. We don't want his prudence. We want all the courage he can muster. Tell him the truth. We are dead sick of prison life. In the interest of humanity he must set us free. In return we will all love him tenderly."

At such speeches, spoken in the best of good faith, Térézia, as a rule, merely shook her head. Sometimes she laughed.

Joséphine took the tortoiseshell pin from Ninon's outstretched hand—poor little thin hand—the duchess was looking very ill—and fastened it as best she could in Térézia's *coiffure*. The ladies, owing to prison regulations, had all close-cropped heads. Térézia's curls grew in profusion, with a glow all their own, soft as silk and bright as gold. To-night there was no lack of animation in her beautiful face. Her eyes shone, by the light of that poor little taper, like rare pearls. They hadn't a stick of rouge between them, but excitement had lent her all the color she needed.

Ninon possessed a tiny filigree flask of attar of roses. Very gravely she unscrewed the cork and presented Térézia with a very precious drop.

"Thank you," said Térézia almost solemnly.

The sweet perfume flooded the cell. Joséphine closed her eyes and tried to imagine that she had strayed into Roger and Gallet's shop in the Rue St. Honoré. However, it was rather beyond her—so she opened them again to admire Térézia.

"You look charming," she said; "quite charming. He'll

want to fly away with you. Promise us you won't let him. You must come back again—*pauvre enfant!*”

“I'll come back,” said Térézia dreamily, “laden with promises——”

“Much good they'll do us,” said Joséphine.

“Trust me!” Térézia's voice rang sharp and hard.

“We all trust you. Every one of us,” said the duchess earnestly.

“Thank you, my dear friends.”

Ninon, with a graceful gesture, threw back her head and embraced Madame Carrabus with much tenderness.

“Tell him to hurry,” she said. “Make him understand, clearly, that we are very much inconvenienced at Les Carmes. I would love a hot bath.”

“I'd sell my soul for a looking-glass,” said Joséphine flippantly.

“I'd sell mine for change of linen,” agreed Térézia.

“It is wicked to complain when God has been so good to us,” whispered Ninon, sorry for her little fit of temper.

“You have got to thank Joseph for your life, darling,” said Madame de Beauharnais.

“I know it. Joseph is a magician.”

Térézia glanced at her charming watch, daintily jeweled and enameled. “He is very late. It is more than half-past ten.”

“Never mind. Wash your hands. I never doubt Joseph. Has he ever failed to keep a promise?”

“Never!”

Joséphine poured out a modicum of cold water into their little tin basin. (Both she and Ninon had generously abstained from washing for several days so that Térézia might have enough.) Once a week the ladies were given a regulation pint of cold—fairly clean—water for purposes of ablution.

At first they had angrily demanded a better supply. However, all their sarcasm was wasted on the young warder—the same who had one evening stolen their mattress.

"Take it or leave it," he'd grunted. "It is all the same to me."

Now they never complained. They would preserve their self-respect, as Joséphine put it, at the expense of their complexions.

At times all three of them—especially Térézia—would think sadly of their plenished pots of skin food; their *eau de toilette*—golden and refreshing; their delicate invisible rouge; their lip-salve; their immense powder-puffs; their cut-glass bottles of perfumes; their stacks of under-linen; their silk stockings; and, when they grew very sad indeed, of their dear little bedroom slippers, daintily embroidered in colored silks. . . .

Joséphine could almost read Térézia's aching thoughts, which she understood and respected. On such depressing occasions the long hours dragged wearily in Cell 306.

Only the little duchess would lightly wave aside the attractions of her toilet-table, and spend a great deal of time happily thinking of Ninette and Charlemagne-Marie, playing in her company in the home orchards, in far-away Picardy, under the auspices of brilliant sunshine.

Sometimes Ninon would recall the sad evening when her tall cousin had gone away—leaving a blank behind him—and when Joseph had returned her her lease of life, wrapped, as it were, in a cloak of abuse. How he had cursed and stormed! Dear Joseph! Even the dreadful master-cook—in spite of his unlucky bet—had looked at him very respectfully.

Térézia dried her hands and wiped her face on the very grubby family towel.

"I am really anxious," she said. "It would be so like Tallien to back out of a difficulty."

Joséphine measured the life of the candle with a practical eye before answering. "No, you are not," she said, briskly, "you are only impatient. With care, it'll last half an hour."

Ninon, who had lain down on the bed because she was tired of standing, here raised herself on her elbow.

"I hear footsteps," she said. "Listen!"

The ladies strained their ears. There were always sounds at Les Carmes. A great prison is always, day and night, awake. When does pain sleep?

A low knock on their door—bolted on the outside—justified Ninon's statement.

She jumped up, and threw the thin coverlet around her bare shoulders. Her white satin dress, trimmed with red velvet bows, was neatly folded on the floor.

Joséphine had not undressed, but was still in her dinner finery. Now she quickly wrapped a lace shawl round Térézia.

"My dear, my dear," she breathed, "what wouldn't I give to be in your shoes! I love an adventure, an adventure with a man in it! Don't be careful. Turn his head—send him home famishing. It is the only way with men."

Térézia hardly listened to this wise counsel. She was watching the little door with a fascinated expression.

"Come in," she said.

The bolt grated in the heavy bar. The door opened two inches.

"Good-by," said the duchess, stealing two thin arms round Térézia's splendid throat. "God bless you."

Térézia bent down and kissed Ninon. "I am frightened," she whispered.

"Follow," called a voice outside—a strange voice!

"Oh!" gasped Térézia, shrinking against the wall, "it is a trap! I am done for!"

"You have no right to say such a thing," said Joséphine, nearly crying with vexation. She gave Térézia a little push; also a grain of comfort. "He loves you," she murmured. "He adores you."

Then she boldly flung open the door, and looked down the interminable and almost pitch-dark corridor. At the further end there gleamed a faint lantern. A drove of rats whisked past, to the left, with unmistakable scratching feet.

Joséphine did not draw back. Instead, she beckoned to Térézia. "Now is your time," she whispered. "Fly!"

Térézia took her courage in both her hands, and ran swiftly down the gloomy passage towards the lantern.

Joséphine stared after her with breathless interest.

"But she *is* a lucky girl," she said. "Ninon, *chérie*——"

Suddenly the door was flung back in her face. As she retreated into the cell, she heard the heavy bolt rasp against its socket.

Térézia followed her unknown guide down interminable passages, winding, crooked, deeply vaulted. They passed through echoing doorways, and down steep staircases, indented by the tread of many generations. Once Térézia nearly stepped into a shining pool of water. The dim lantern showed her, for an instant, curious mosses, thin thread-like mosses, clinging to glistening black stones, stones which were perpetually wet.

She clung to the reeking wall, which here was of a very rough surface. The wall looked as if it was hewn out of a single slab of rock, a mighty, stationary, eternal wall which defied freedom.

She grew giddy with terror. Where was he leading her to—this speechless, utterly indifferent man? He had never glanced at her. Now and again his hollow voice echoed in that frightful labyrinth as he chanted his parrot-like order: "Follow!" She followed blindly.

Before she could grasp the significance of the blessed moment she found herself standing in a long narrow street, looking up at the sky. The night air struck her as very cold after the stifling atmosphere of Les Carmes. Neither moon nor stars were visible, but already a faint streak of light showed in the east; the spirit of dawn, waiting on the spirit of night. The effect was very beautiful.

The guide had vanished.

As her eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness she noticed the tall houses, the shuttered windows, and down

the street the figure of a man, wrapped in a Venetian cloak.

Térézia walked down the quiet street. Coming quite close to the man, she paused—looked at him—and slipped within the folds of his heavy cloak. Thus they stood side by side, hand in hand, and neither spoke a word. Not a sound broke the stillness.

Once again Térézia lifted her brilliant eyes and looked long at Tallien, her lover.

He was no longer a Terrorist, but a man in love. Touch is more eloquent than speech. He pressed her very close, and, bending down, he searched for her lips. . . . It was an eternal kiss.

She swayed a little, her lips moved; she gave a faint sob. And around them circled the freshness of June, the silence of dawn, and the spell of human desire.

He found his voice at last in an agony of appeal. "Térézia," he whispered, lifting her off her feet, "I love you! Why haven't you come before? Why have you denied me this happiness? Your mouth, Térézia, I have thought of day and night since we parted. And of your white arms, and your soft breast and your honey-sweet words. Speak, darling. Tell me I am not dreaming."

His insistence brought her to earth. Térézia buried her hot face in his scented coat. His luxurious coat appealed to her. The man offended her, but his clothes gave her rich satisfaction.

He laughed happily, and put her on her feet.

"Come," he said.

"Where are we going to?"

"Hush!"

She followed him eagerly.

They walked a few paces down the quiet street, and stopped outside a tall and shuttered house. Tallien took a latchkey out of his pocket and opened the front door. It led into a bare and empty passage, very poorly lit. Térézia could just see a wide and shallow staircase facing

her, and, beyond, a tall paneled door. All the wood-work was of black oak.

Tallien strode across the echoing hall with no pretense of precaution. With a flourish he opened the door of a room, evidently prepared for their reception—a sight for hungry eyes!

He swaggered across to the fireplace and took up his position on the hearth-rug, staring at his mistress. No, her beauty remained unmarred, in spite of poor feeding, villainous housing and her precarious existence. Tallien rubbed his hands.

“Come in,” he said. “We haven’t over much time. We mustn’t waste a single precious minute.”

Térédia closed the door behind her, and very gently rubbed her eyes.

She found herself in a little, cheerful, wainscoted parlor, paneled with black oak, and, half-way down the walls, fitted with embossed leather hangings showing fruits, melow with color, on a dim background of old gold.

The curtains were drawn in front of the deep window embrasures, heavy curtains of tawny velvet; between the windows stood an antique Chinese chest, and on the wall above there was a long mirror, framed in carved and gilded wood.

A broad and comfortable settee faced the enormous fireplace, lit by a small fire of birch logs; there were cushioned chairs, covered in blue leather to match; and wonderful Persian rugs placed on the shining oak floor. Candles blazed everywhere, on the fine chimney-piece, in the massive brass chandelier, and on the round supper-table, which stood in the centre of the room.

The table was covered with a damask cloth, lace-edged, and set out with an elegant cold supper. Térédia noticed at once ripe strawberries, in a Nankin bowl, and an equally generous supply of cream; in a wine-cooler, packed in ice, champagne; dishes of spiced bread and rich currant loaves; dishes of chicken and ham, smoked tongue, mayonnaise of salmon; vegetables, salads, creams, jellies

and sweetmeats. There was a fine show of silver plate, a glittering array of knives and forks; tall fragile goblets, decanters of red and white wine, and a service of blue-and-white porcelain. On the centre of the table stood a great bowl of cut crystal, filled with fragrant red roses.

A door ajar led into an inner room—very white and gay. Térézia noticed a fine bed, draped with blue satin curtains and luxuriously piled with blankets, down quilts, and snowy sheets and pillows. On the blue satin counterpane lay a varied assortment of dainty female apparel and, close by, on the pile carpet, a pair of charming blue satin slippers.

In the bath-room adjoining stood a commodious, steaming bath, with a plentiful array of towels, scents, soaps, brushes. . . . Not a grain of dust anywhere! Not a speck of dirt! A gorgeous, joyful, fairy vision, fit for fairy woman. . . .

Térézia rubbed her eyes. O tantalizing dream! She looked at Tallien—tall, self-assured, infinitely commonplace. Thank God, he at least was not of the stuff of dreams! In a rush of relief, she flew at him, swift as a bird, tingling with life.

“O you live man!” she breathed. “You at least are real, unfanciful, unromantic. *You* never invented this glory? What shall I enjoy first?” She pressed her mouth, warm and palpitating, against his willing lips.

He laughed loudly.

“You are as beautiful as ever, Witch of the World,” he said, waving one hand, and with the other clutching at the back of her neck. “Joseph’s little idea. He is full of fancies. ‘There is no pleasure like pleasing others,’ he said. ‘Let’s give her the limit.’ The house belonged to an artist who has recently trotted over to the majority. Joseph has had his eye on the place for some time. In fact, he made me take it over, a bargain—a distinct bargain. Ha, ha! Cost me a stamp, darling. He took no end of trouble to please you. Went to your flat, and searched for incriminating documents—carried off a

bundle of clothes, and fal-lals—and stopped your maid's howls by a guinea or two. Put himself to some danger, and lied like a carp to evade drowning. His soldier brother is home on leave, and it is he who fetched you to-night. Joseph——”

Térézia was not listening. She disengaged herself from Tallien's large hand, went across the room and knelt down in front of the cut-glass bowl, burying her face in the roses.

“Years ago,” she murmured, “I gathered the roses of Caravachell. Tallien, they were absolutely gorgeous! I can see the big terrace aflame with color, and the deep lake, beyond the bowling-green; it was always cold and clear on the hottest day. I was never afraid of heat. Mamma would shut herself up in the house, eat sugar cakes (*pauvre maman!*) and read novels. Papa was more or less engaged in Madrid. When he came home we used to feast, and sing, and dance. And I would gather the roses and fill his room to overflowing. I was always extravagant. Even at the age of ten I'd trample on a flower which lacked a petal. I'd have nothing less than perfection. . . . Térézia, Térézia, will you ever go back on yourself?” She spoke passionately. “Joséphine lives in her dreams, and Ninon lives for her children. I live for myself!”

She stretched out her hand and dropped a strawberry into her mouth. She did it again, and again.

Tallien watched Térézia feasting her senses, gloriously happy. He grew suddenly angry. “Where do I come in?” he asked sullenly. “You're beastly selfish, darling.” He sucked his lips.

“We can't afford to throw away any roses—we women of the world. Often we have to put up with second-rate flowers, all dull and speckled, poor things.”

“Don't talk nonsense!”

“It is utter nonsense, darling, but so satisfying!” She reached for the cream-jug and, pouring out a cupful, she swallowed it at a gulp.

“This is living,” she said.

Tallien noticed several stains on her elegant blue dress, several holes in her elegant silk stockings, and a faint roughness on her peach skin. She had suffered hardships—this pearl of vanity! His toy!

"Make yourself lovely," he whispered, kneeling beside her. "Feed me, Térézia."

She rose immediately. His great bulky body interfered with the beauty of the supper-table. In kneeling down he had crushed the exquisite table-linen, and had with his big hand clumsily pushed the wine glasses together with a jangling, jarring sound. She could have screamed. He was unutterably vulgar, this over-scented, over-dressed man, stained by crime.

"Tallien," she said, bending over him. "You must save us! We are dying by inches in that horrible place. Oh, Tallien, the dirt at Les Carmes! Dirt grows and sticks and peels and infects. We are all infectious. When hope dies, sorrow lives."

He floundered to his feet: "I love you, by God I love you!" he said.

"Love has nothing to do with it," said Térézia. "You have got to be very brave, my darling—a lion in action, not a lion in love."

"I am brave."

"To-night——"

"I have risked a good deal to see you. If Robespierre finds us out there will be the devil to pay."

"Damn you for a dirty coward!"

Then, regretting her temper, she cooed up to him.

"Think of the rewards, Tallien. Think of your little Térézia, your faithful, adoring wife. I'll love you, Tallien, if you kill Robespierre. All France will love you. You'll be great and famous; rich and powerful. We will keep open house and give splendid entertainments. And when all the candles are put out, you shall hold me in your arms, and love me as much as ever you like."

He heaved a sigh and looked at her sideways.

"That is so. You can tell lies—ha-ha!—as well as any one."

"Not when my life is at stake."

"'Pon my word you ought to have been dead, ma'am, ahem, an angel long ago. I have done all I can do to save you."

Térédia looked up at him adoringly.

"How wonderful you are," she said softly.

"A man can do no more than his best," he said unctuously. "Hurry, my pet. That bath is getting cold."

She laughed. "I'm bewildered. You spoil me, sir."

She ran into the inner room, clapping her hands in naïve enjoyment. "It is perfectly lovely," she called. "I won't keep you longer than I can help. Give me half an hour's grace. Say your prayers, Tallien. Pray for courage and strength of purpose. . . . I'm worth it. . . . What do you say? No, don't come in! I forbid you, sir!"

Térédia, rapidly undressing, suddenly remembered Joséphine's wise counsel. She'd act on it . . . in the interests of humanity.

"What are you laughing for?"

"Out of sheer happiness, sir, sheer happiness," she called.

He waited outside the closed door trembling with impatience.

CHAPTER XLIII

TALLIEN lounged back in his comfortable high-backed chair and swore that he'd stand by Térézia through oceans of blood, if necessary. He hammered his spoon on the supper-table, and considered his mistress's charms. She had been mocking, enchanting, captivating, complaisant, and, through each phase, she had watched Tallien as a panther watches his prey.

She was nearly sure of him—nearly. . . . All he wanted she'd give him; beauty to admire; light words to laugh at, and touch for touch. Her kisses had made him astonishingly brave.

Térézia had curled herself up on the broad settee, an armful of cushions behind her head, two or three divine roses in her hand. She was enjoying every fleeting moment; her supper, her lover, her drowsiness; the sight of her slim foot in its delicate blue satin slipper; the touch of her fresh linen against her perfumed body.

She glanced lazily around the room, appreciating the soft candle-light, the shining black oak panels, the old gilt mirror, the fine antique Persian carpet at her feet, the handsome spaciousness of the fireplace, with its gleaming brass dogs and fire-irons . . . every detail of the little room was artistically perfect. Térézia loved beauty and felt a fleeting pang of regret for the artist who had been obliged to leave it all . . . rather lucky for her, though. She smoothed the soft folds of her pretty wrapper. Surely she was an angel, and this was heaven? . . . Centuries ago she had been familiar with suffering and pain and dirt—the fearful degradation of dirt.

Some remark from Tallien—who was still occupied in eating and, incidentally choking himself over a large plate—

ful of jelly—disturbed her pleasant musing. She turned away from the sound of his voice, and buried her face in her hands, overwhelmed with self-pity. Presently she would have to go back to prison carrying three parcels; a present for Ninon, a present for Joséphine, and a packet of memories for herself . . . she would never forget this precious night—a star set between two hells. To marry Tallien was to court misery. To return to Cell 306 was suicide. She'd like to leap into the blue satin bed, and sleep for ever.

Tallien continued playing with his knuckles on the supper-table, and airing his natural grievances. Save the mark—had Térézia turned prude? Once and for always he'd be obeyed! His fat cheeks, decidedly flushed, worked convulsively; his bloodshot eyes glared viciously. He wanted more than she'd given him—more for his money—more for his courage! He was risking his life to please her! He got up, banging his chair against the table, and stood over her, recalling episodes which might just as well (in the interest of morality) have remained unrelated.

Térézia let him speak. His words did not offend her in the least. In fact, she smiled angelically. He dropped his blustering tone to tell her a piece of news. Tallien was seldom above meanness and lies. He looked at her, stretched at her ease on the sofa, with uncontrollable lust and rage. His hand trembled. Would this hurt her?

"Darling," he said blandly, "I promise you I'll take my revenge presently. As a husband you'll find me very strict."

He sat down unsteadily. (He had drunk many glasses of champagne.) "Do you remember that silly ass, Guéry, the youth who traveled with you from Bordeaux?"

"Why, yes," she said. "What of him?"

"You won't travel with him again in a hurry."

"You are not surely jealous of a boy?"

"No. Not a bit of it. Ha, ha!"

"Give me a kiss, you silly man!"

"I'm silly, am I?" He laughed again. "The boy was executed this morning—one of a batch from La Force. I happened to recognize him on the platform, and he returned my salute very politely. One less of your lovers in this troublesome world, eh? And I tell you, you've got to keep them down." He pulled his chair nearer her and stretched out his hand.

Térézia looked at him with unveiled horror. "Don't touch me!" she cried.

He laughed sardonically. "I knew it! I knew it!" he said nodding his head gloomily. He flew into a volley of abuse.

Suddenly he fell at her feet, the tears running down his face. "You are treating me very badly," he whispered. "I'm on fire, love, on fire."

"There, there," she said, "I did not mean to be unkind." (*Mon cœur*, she thought with resignation, my ill-fated friend—so we are never to meet again?) Tallien was spoiling her exquisite evening. As through a mist she saw the candle-light . . . and her purpose drifting away. She clutched at it as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

Tallien was a man of straw, and infinitely mean. Yet she must submit to him, feign admiration and a love she was very far from feeling; give him kiss for kiss, and promise for promise. (Later she would send her promises flying, like scraps of paper before the wind.)

She gently drew down his head on her breast, and laid two cool fingers on the lids of his bloodshot eyes. At that moment she loathed him—in her imagination she saw him dripping with blood—nevertheless, she wound two soft arms round his neck and pillowed his head on her lap.

He wiped his face on her sleeve, and his evil expression relaxed into a look of utter content.

"My darling," she whispered, her mouth close to his, "as if anything in the world mattered compared to our love! Keep your eyes shut—it will do your poor head good; it is hot." (Her fingers caressed his brow.) "My own, you have work in front of you before you can hope

to win your bride—your willing, joyful bride. I am very proud of my Tallien, and God knows how much I love him! Dear, dear, don't you think I understand that your sufferings are far worse than my own? Yours is a very great undertaking, but the reward is great! We shall both appreciate the sweetness of success."

Still circling him in her arms, she sang a little song which in the old days grim Christina had sung to her:

Tears in your eyes?—
Clouds in April skies—
Sleep, sleep awhile
And bring me a smile.

Give me your hand to hold,
To Fairyland we'll steal,
Where all the toys are gold
And all the smiles are real.

Sleep, sleep, light of mine eye!
Red the glow in the sky,
Faint the light on the stream,
Dear every dream.

By-and-by, baby mine,
The great big moon will shine
Over the cedar tree,
Over the wide, wide sea.

Térédia's voice was low and sweet, and the words were well fitted to the simple melody, yet they made no impression on Tallien.

He brushed his thick black hair from his brow, and looked up at her face with an unmistakable expression. She laughed, a little musical laugh, and, bending down, she kissed him generously . . . he had to be humored. . .

Half an hour later Tallien, appeased, if not satisfied, was smoking a cigarette and watching Térédia, as she arranged two little parcels at a side table. Each contained

a change of linen, a tablet of soap, a tooth-brush, a bottle of scent, and a bag of sweets.

"Give me your pencil," she said.

Tallien obliged her, still with that good-tempered, affectionate smile on his face. How lovely she looked! What a cruel shame it was to stuff her away into a cell!

"Won't they be enchanted!" she said, as she wrote on one parcel, "Joséphine" and on the other "Ninon."

Then she looked round the pleasant room. "It is four in the morning," she said sadly. It had been arranged that Joseph was to come and fetch her at that hour. He had strictly limited her luggage, or we may be sure she would have returned to Cell 306 laden with pillows, rugs, bread, candies, and the blue satin slippers. Térézia sighed as she weighed her modest parcels. She could easily hide them under her shawl. She must be sensible, and, yes, thankful.

Tallien, sitting in his comfortable chair, a large smile on his large face, was turning the pages of a little book in his hand. It was an up-to-date calendar. He and Térézia had been lingering over dates—likely dates. It had pained Térézia that they couldn't agree on the exact day.

"Well," she said, coming forward, "have you decided?"

"Darling," he said, kissing her little hand lightly, "you must have patience. There are practical details to arrange."

"In the meanwhile?" she suggested.

He shrugged his great shoulders (regarding that matter also from a different standpoint). "They'll die. Lots will die. We must give his godship a handsome length of rope. One day I'll screw him into an ugly corner——"

"The day! The day!" she insisted.

"Dear love," he said blandly, as if speaking to a wilful child, "trust me, and you won't go far wrong."

Her impatience was very sweet. He attributed it solely to her devotion to himself. His little girl—wife to be—loved him, as a man of his attractions deserved to be loved.

He shut up his little almanac and wagged a jeweled finger at Térézia.

"I'll give you his handsome head on a charger, soon enough, my pet. I'll put pennies on his eyes, or they would be sure to glitter and frighten you. Nobody must frighten my dear little woman," he added. He laughed at his own wit, vastly pleased with himself.

Térézia leaned over his chair and took his hand in hers.

"Your nails want cutting," she observed.

"Any other remark?" he said, teasing a bright curl at her neck. She was bewitching!

"You are getting a bit fat."

He drew in his breath and puffed out his cheeks. "The better to love you, my dear," he bawled. He grinned until his big square teeth shone in two semi-circles. "The better to bite you, my dear," he said, playfully sucking her thumb.

"Naughty man! What great big arms!"

"The better to hug you, my dear." He drew her roughly down on his knee. "I'll send you a letter tomorrow," he breathed in her ear, "a thunderin' good letter."

Térézia sighed. "How I love you!" she said.

The lovers were disturbed by the sound of footsteps in the passage outside.

Joseph—for it was he—on entering the room was favored by a charming *tableau*. Térézia had the grace to blush, and also to thank him very prettily for her evening's entertainment.

"Don't mention it, madame," said Joseph in his politest manner, doffing his red wig (exposing a neat dark head and a fine forehead). "It has given me great pleasure to have been able to arrange this little interlude, pleasing to all parties. Friend Tallien, my compliments."

Joseph was dressed in his prison garb, filthy, unkempt, with wide jack-boots, excessively muddy; his wig, combed *à la mode*, tucked under his arm; his face moist and sooty; his dirty hands were half hidden by his long red worsted

sleeves, tied back and knotted with pieces of cord. His mouth was defaced by an absent tooth, and altogether his appearance didn't exactly invite confidence.

Térézia slipped off Tallien's knee. Impulsively she came towards Joseph.

"Tell me," she said, "who are you?"

"Joseph, madame."

"Am I never to bless you by any other name?"

He shook his head. "Never is a big word," he said.

"Sit down a moment, and have a drink," said Tallien, hospitably.

"No, thanks."

Térézia smiled. "It is all arranged," she said—her eyes very brilliant.

"Tallien stays on top, and the little blue god, alias the Incorruptible One, alias Maximilien Robespierre, goes under. Shall we swear to see this thing through?" said Joseph, absently blowing out two candles as he spoke.

Tallien fidgeted on his comfortable chair—his big legs sprawling wide. He didn't like Joseph's easy confidence. Confound his impudence!

"I'll denounce someone," he drawled. "Maybe I'll denounce Joseph. I could whisk Joseph to Kingdom Come as easily as a fly crawls."

Joseph looked him up and down.

"If it comes to that, I could denounce Tallien as easily as a bird flies," he said, pleasantly.

Tallien laughed uproariously, jingling his money in his pockets, and flashing his big eyes on the company.

"A truce," he cried, "a truce! I trust you, Joseph."

"I trust you, Tallien."

Térézia looked at Joseph imploringly.

"I've been entertaining my friends," said Joseph, "Master Cook, Master Dignity and some twenty other congenial spirits. I left them pleasantly drunk for our purpose. Alas, ma'am, I've come to fetch you home. The party is over."

"Thank you, sir," answered Térézia. "I'll get ready

at once." She dropped him a curtsy, and disappeared into the next room.

The men were silent during her brief absence. Tallien was aggrieved at this summary breaking-up of his orgy. He hadn't nearly finished with Térézia. He was perfectly happy where he was. He didn't want to stir beyond the next room, where the bed looked inviting. He yawned and blinked his eyes and scratched his head.

"She is a very beautiful woman," he said, sulkily. "And very easy to get on with. Also she loves me very much."

"Which ought to simplify matters," said Joseph, bowing. The bow was for Térézia and also for her old blue dress, stained and pathetic. The old blue dress had noble associations.

He took up her parcels. "I daren't allow more," he said sadly. "At your convenience, madame."

"I am quite ready," answered Térézia, taking a handful of red roses from the crystal bowl.

Tallien clattered to his feet, noisy with regret. "Wait a minute, precious, wait a minute," he said.

Joseph very considerately, went outside and, cautiously opening the hall door, he looked down the empty street.

Straight ahead loomed the grim prison, the prison eternally awake.

Overhead the dawn had spread her fanlight, heralding another beautiful day.

CHAPTER XLIV

THERE were plenty of executions in Paris throughout the month of June and well on into leafy July before anything wonderful happened.

The poor ladies in Cell 306 lived on from day to day, bright hope exchanged for dull acceptance. Térézia's fairy party and fairy presents and fairy promises faded into dim recollection as the weeks slipped past in horrible monotony. Even the daily reading of the Lists failed to excite the prisoners. There was a certain sameness about them. Those who stayed behind almost envied those who went out. The good-byes were cordial, tinged with jealousy. And no one cried.

Tallien didn't again repeat his indiscretion. Even his love-letters to Térézia grew sensibly fewer, and sensibly colder.

Truth to tell, the fairy party had very nearly ruined his prestige. A woman's kiss was not worth the scandal of risking his own neck. As a precautionary measure, Tallien denied the whole affair.

"Lord bless us," he said, highly amused, twirling his cane, "there are plenty of women in Paris without taking one from *Les Carmes*."

His good-humor saved his head—this time much to Robespierre's chagrin. He had so counted on friend Tallien's folly. (He'd known all about it.) He was aching to denounce him.

But the Assembly no longer listened to his godship with their old attentive respect. In fact, many members paid scant attention to his fiery orations. Some even yawned openly in his face; others laughed in derision.

Robespierre grew to love his own society in those dog-days when the baking sun hung over dusty, smelling Paris. He shunned committee-rooms as a man naturally shuns a plague-spot. New laws, new speeches, new ideas filled him with suspicion. They savored of personal indignity. More than once his own amendments (the only ones he tolerated) had been received with silence, ominous silence which is akin to mutiny.

Men of our spacious times glance back at that arch-fiend—new-baked god and ancient devil—as he hurries the House through some new-fangled formality—smacking his dry tongue against the roof of his mouth—little green eyes darting fire like revolving lamps, trying to pierce each man's secret mind. Once safe from the precincts of the sacred Assembly, he tears down the hot streets, faster and faster—until he dashes madly through the leafy Bois—alone!

Alone.

So he ran—as if possessed—through the pretty, leafy glades of the quiet park; arms swinging like pendulums, eyes glaring like revolving lamps; tongue wagging sedulously—he had acquired a habit of talking to himself—alone, always alone.

They weren't enjoyable walks, but very tiring. When darkness fell, with shifty eyes looking out for possible assassins, he would drag his weary body home and lay it down to rest on his mean bed, beneath the ruby lamp which emitted a gentle, deceptive ray. . . . At night his real misery began.

By report he took to prayers and kind deeds. By report he had been seen kissing little children, laying gentle hands on their fluffy golden curls, and giving them sugar-plums.

And what of friend Tallien, with his large smile, and his no less large purpose?

He walked on air—as the saying goes, to signify exquisite self-assurance—bright, celestial air, *couleur de rose*. He grew very bright in his dress, too—these warm

summer days, when the soft winds played over parched Paris, each breath full of promise.

It was astonishing how fine it kept, how the flowers bloomed in hidden gardens, how old disused carriages creaked in old disused coach-houses, and how lords and ladies of the veritable *ancien régime* took to high play. Their stakes were the lives of men. Would any of them survive the Terror?

In the meanwhile the tumbrils ran their dreary course to the outskirts of the town, rather overcrowded, if anything. All classes were represented. Great calm ladies, and common women who howled, *grands seigneurs*, and mean men who might have claimed legitimate descent, but never a shred of courage; big, ruffianly fellows who cried like babies at sight of the scaffold—ugly sights, very.

As we have said, Tallien took a brilliant interest in his new clothes, and in his dress almost eclipsed friend Robespierre. The Supreme Being, by the way, did not do justice to his azure coat, wearing it with a certain slovenliness of style which the whole Assembly noticed, and most particularly genial Tallien.

Up to the very last these two devoted enemies—it sounds trivial to write them down as friends—clung to each other in brotherly affection, supporting each other and telling each other pretty little lies, smiling at each other across the Assembly, giving each other little hints, little courtesies. They knew they were humbugging each other; they knew they were arch-enemies—but their exaggerated attentions, their breezy compliments waxed none the slower for that. However, by mutual consent they kept their politeness (like their glossy beaver hats) for out-of-door wear.

“Pierre, my blue cravat,” said Tallien. “My silver tissue waistcoat—you know, the one woven with little red rosebuds and forget-me-nots.”

“Yes, *citoyen*,” answered the discreet manservant, who took an interest in his master’s appearance.

Sometimes he would make use of his card of admission and watch his mannikin from a humble seat in the gallery of the House. At a distance Tallien showed off the cut of his coat very well indeed. Sometimes the discreet valet would tremble for the sleeves. Tallien had a way of emphasizing his oratory by very wide gestures. No decent coat will stand gestures worthy of a prize-fighter. As we all know, gentlemen of the ring, when professionally engaged, leave their coats behind them. Tallien, contrary to rules, entered the arena dressed like a dandy showing himself off at a flower-show.

Pierre gently adjusted his master's rather wide coat-skirts. In other words, he gave them a pull, and stepped back to appreciate the effect.

"Excellent," he murmured. "I like that seam straight down the centre of the back. And that little touch of embroidery on the collar—though daring—is very elegant."

In truth, this morning of 27th July, 1794 (old style), Citoyen Tallien cut a very dashing figure. His new boots shone; his silver waistcoat shone—at two louis a yard; his large face shone with soap and perspiration. It was a very hot morning and friend Tallien's thoughts matched the day, if they didn't actually out-rival it.

Tallien breathed a deep, excessively unctuous sigh.

"Give me that little box," he drawled, "in the left-hand drawer, Pierre. Don't be an arrant ass, man."

His man immediately produced the right article. (He'd looked at it often.) He blew an imaginary grain of dust off the lid, as he handed the box to Tallien.

Tallien snapped open the cover and took out a little dagger and stroked it as he might have stroked the back of a playful kitten.

"As a curiosity, *citoyen*," ventured his man, watching the dagger, "that is a nice little trifle. Personally I wouldn't trust it the length of my arm."

Tallien, still stroking the dagger very tenderly, agreed.

"Presently it will not only be a curiosity but also an object of historical value," he said.

"Indeed, sir?"

"It is a pretty little thing, a very pretty little thing."

"Yes, monseigneur."

Tallien did not observe the slip of a title. And if he did it did not worry him—on the contrary, he had all a plutocrat's love of rank, and considered himself deserving of the best. This morning he looked upon every omen as felicitous.

"I am rather superstitious, myself, sir," said Pierre.

"Yes," said Tallien, slipping his dagger into his coat pocket. "Most people are. I must say, I'd rather carry a mascot than go without one."

"Yes, sir."

"Especially if it comes from a lovely lady. Lovely ladies are very powerful. They've got their secret spells and charms—I don't blame 'em. No, I don't."

"Very natural," said Pierre.

"By the way, you can have that plum-colored suit. I've done with it."

"Thank you, sir. There is a bit of lace on it which I shall remove."

Tallien waved his hand. "Keep it," he said magnificently.

Pierre, with his hand on his heart, bowed deeply, and presented his master with a scented handkerchief. Tallien sniffed at it before putting it in his pocket—rather a vulgar sniff. Then he stared critically at his tall reflection in the tall mirror.

"You'll do," he said jocularly, smiling at his splendid hat, trying it on at a jaunty angle, on his well-greased locks. Yes, he was pleased with his appearance. If it wasn't undignified we'd liken him to a showy brass top, wound up to its highest velocity. Yes, he was spinning very fast; spinning in the right direction, too. Nothing could stop him now from doing his duty. Presently—to

carry the metaphor further—he was bound to slow down, and spin on his side.

“Look in at the House, if you care to, Pierre, this morning. I expect we’ll have an interesting debate.”

His condescension, his affability, his generosity—all jogged together for pride o’ place. Tallien (in his own estimation) exceeded himself this morning.

“I thank you, sir.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Treading very lightly, Tallien advanced into the middle of the room, and struck an attitude of conscious elegance before the full-length mirror (very suggestive of the last phase of the brass top), raising his right arm dramatically, as if saluting an unseen presence.

“Térézia,” he said. “Your very obedient servant, ma’am.”

The address was brief, and mystifying on the whole. The discreet manservant, figuratively speaking, stuffed his ears with cotton-wool. He never presumed.

Tallien, neither remembering his indiscretion nor ignoring it,—still treading on air—took the shortest way to the House. As he walked he whistled a delightful tune, yet not loud enough to court attention.

The fine weather had attracted quite a crowd of people out of doors.

All was commotion in the dusty lobby of the House. Members stood about in congested, excited groups, apparently all talking at once, and paying not the least attention to each other.

Into this *galère* walked Tallien—attractive as a honey-cake to a swarm of wasps. From his sweet expression you might have supposed that he’d have liked to embrace the company collectively and individually.

However, he restricted himself to shaking hands with some dozen of his immediate friends and supporters; nor did he escape some gentle raillery on his smart appearance.

“Are you going to a wedding, *citoyen*?”

“No; are you?”

(When a popular hero makes the slightest jest it is always received with a perfect salvo of laughter.)

"Get along—you artful dodger! Show us your bag of tricks!" said the humorist.

"Presently, presently," said Tallien significantly, tapping his coat pocket.

"What a collar!" cried an ecstatic voice in the crowd. "No, no, look at the back, *citoyen*! Did you ever see a more faithful reproduction? It is a work of art."

"Most excellently well done. Two mandarins and four green leaves. Quite an idea!"

They surged lovingly around him, his admiring friends. If his coat-collar had been embroidered with four carrots and six green leaves, they would have been just as enchanted—just as outspoken in their praise. None envied Tallien. All admired him.

Through the high, uncurtained windows the brilliant July sun streamed down on this body of representative men—searching out Tallien for particular attention.

In the glare of the light his greasy black hair shone like ebony, and his full lips were like a pair of crushed pomegranate petals—very red, and rather cracked. Had he a touch of fever—eh?

Tallien rubbed his hands and looked around at the crowd. "Has he arrived?" he asked a stout legislator.

"Half an hour ago. He ran through the lobby like a scuttling beetle—looking neither to right nor left. Le Brun called out, 'Good morning, *Citoyen Robespierre*.' He had not the heart or the nerve to answer him." (The fat man pinched Tallien's arm.) "In a funk, my man, a blue devil of a funk! You will be able to rat him out as easily as Saint-Just drones to empty benches."

"They will be full presently," observed Tallien significantly, looking through the half-open doors leading to the hall.

In truth Saint-Just was delivering a dry-as-dust oration to a poor audience. The President—in due observance of his duty—was seated in his tribune, which was

reached by a flight of steps. On his table stood a bell. Tallien also caught a glimpse of Citoyen Robespierre, in his usual place, on the cross benches, facing Saint-Just.

"Look at him," said the fat man. "I'll bet you a thousand sheep his ears are twitching—and his eyes are glued on the floor, and his fingers are working. He is playing cat's-cradle with his thumbs—a last desperate resource to appear at his ease."

An immense smile lit Tallien's face. You might have thought he'd walked round the clock, stealing a couple of hours in advance of Time. That he was not contemplating a big *coup*, but that he had actually carried it off, by an overwhelming majority.

"Poor wee mite," said Tallien with exquisite irony.

His absurd expression was received with tumultuous laughter.

"Poor wee mite," echoed a wit, who lived by flattering imitation.

Tallien smiled kindly at the young man.

"Now tell me," he said earnestly, "of last night's proceedings? I haven't so far heard anything but a garbled version of the affair. The wretched monster seems to have exceeded himself."

This quick descriptive change of the same object worried the Repeating Wit. He had, however, sufficient wit to realize that if he called out "wretched monster" the remark would have been an artistic failure. So he gloomily held his tongue and gloomily sucked the head of his cane.

The fat man raised his hands. "A shockin' exhibition," he said. "I was present all the evenin' at the Jacobins' Club. Why, the man frightened *me*! I tell you, for a pair of chestnuts he would have committed suicide. Ravin' mad! Shrieked like an owl, caught in a blazing barn. His usual gimcrack nonsense, his incorruptibleness, his integrity—the Supreme Being——"

"I know," said Tallien.

The fat man caught his breath—delighted at his own eloquence.

"His pet crony, David, the artist, took him off at last. They sobbed in each other's arms—mighty grand. 'Let us drink hemlock together,' said pal David. Here, brother Augustin—you know, Robespierre the younger—asked to share his brother's fate. All three jabbered like monkeys, and implored the privilege of dying to vindicate their honor—*Vive la République!*"

"Might oblige 'em—at a pinch," said Tallien, looking round at his vastly increased audience.

A murmur ran through the crowd.

"Rip along, Tallien," said a voice. "There is nothing worse than uncertainty."

"David bolted this morning," volunteered a member.

"Sensible fellow," said Tallien.

The fat man held up a fat hand. "A pity you missed it—bar none, the liveliest bit of excitement we have had lately—and we've been spoiled—eh?"

Tallien nodded.

"Things reached a climax when his godship tried to read his speech, the one we declined to listen to on Wednesday—'member?"

Tallien nodded.

"An infernal din. We behaved damned well. We jumped and howled and whistled and groaned—you never heard such a devil of a noise. Some ripped the seats off the benches and others started kickin' the walls—nervy gentlemen dodging here and there, like jumping-frogs. Lecoulteux—smart little chap—let off the fireworks, genuine, sir, crackin' rockets under his blue nose—raisin' smoke, raisin' blue flames—raisin' the wind."

Tallien nodded.

"He had a lively send-off, you bet. The little cur was not dished by smoke or fire, nor noise, nor anything. He backed his own authority, tried to howl *us* down—blasted impertinence!—his lungs working like bellows, his face scarlet with mortification. 'I demand!' he shrieked. 'I demand!' Who cares a tinker's curse what he demanded? At length, as I told you, David hustled him out of the

room—a sulphurous beggar—the tears pouring down his face. Never saw such a heavenly sight! A burst water-pipe spluttering at the main. Little Max burst to pieces!”

The speaker paused to wipe the saliva off his mouth with a yellow handkerchief.

“Every word is gospel truth,” he added; “every word.”

Tallien slid his hand through the fat man’s arm.

“Shall we go in?” he asked. “My friends”—he turned and faced his audience, “I reckon on your support.”

“We are with you heart and soul,” said Paul Barras.

A great big word squeaked, as usual, in Tallien’s throat before it flew, gloriously free, over his large red lips—a brilliant, audacious word.

Inside the hall he dropped the fat man’s arm and walked alone up the gangway to his seat, opposite Robespierre, followed at some distance by his supporters. Each man filed into his place. Saint-Just broke off his speech to give Tallien a smile, as he sat down beside him. Tallien glanced at Citoyen Robespierre, apparently deeply engrossed by his boots—the man who had given him his first bag of gold.

Robespierre, without looking up, felt that Tallien had entered the hall, and that he had honored him with his recognition. He lifted his throbbing, aching head and nodded. The two men stared at each other. Across the hall they stared at each other—measuring each other’s weakness. In Robespierre’s blurred, troubled mind all that he could take hold of was Tallien’s flashy waistcoat. The silver tissue gleamed like a coat of mail. And all that mattered to Tallien was Robespierre’s evident fatigue. He had no fight left in him.

Saint-Just could no longer complain of poor attention. In that packed hall you could have heard a pin drop—so intense was the silence, broken by one man’s sing-song utterance.

Five minutes elapsed. The great round-faced, white-faced clock, over the President’s chair, ticked out the flying seconds. . . . Another five minutes passed, devoted

to a statistical statement of excessive dryness, which no one heard. There were flies in the big hall, a shaft of sunlight, three hundred determined men, and one man whose heart ran amuck.

Tallien slipped his right hand into his coat-pocket.

Suddenly, with an impassioned gesture, he rose to his feet, and, holding a dagger in his hand, he cut Saint-Just short in his peroration.

"Citoyen President, I demand a hearing!" he cried.

A murmur ran across the packed benches. Every eye was turned on Tallien. Robespierre ceased to play cat's-cradle and gave him his whole attention.

The President bent forward and touched his bell. He had intimated that the House was ready to listen to Citoyen Tallien.

Tallien stood upright, every nerve in his large body working at high pressure. The revolution—and undreamed-of-honors—held him taut as a ramrod. His words gushed strongly. His indictment, one flood of eloquence, was cruelly direct. At every word the tumult increased. Men howled their assent—hats waved in the air—handkerchiefs, red, yellow and blue, fluttered as butterflies dance in the sun. Tallien's arms gesticulated wildly. He pointed the dagger at the scapegoat—a cowering, terrified, mouthing scapegoat, lately dubbed the Supreme Being.

"I denounce the traitor!" he cried. "I denounce Robespierre. Look at him, men of France! His very face admits his own guilty actions. To the guillotine with Robespierre!"

Then his voice dropped—it took a downward note—a note of anguish.

"Think of the others," he said. "The innocent victims suffering for his abominable crimes! Shall he go free? O brothers in mercy—consider the women."

His eyes flew the round of the hall, and discovered tears; then they returned to face the President, who had risen from his seat, jangling his little bell.

Tallien sat down.

On the steps leading to the presidential tribune a little man, a trembling little man, with damp, lank hair, and a pitiable expression on his ghastly face, was running up and down. His action was strangely suggestive of a small boy at play—who simply runs up and down the stairs to please himself. Yet this strange little man—so hideously and mightily transformed—was acting quite unconsciously.

“Men of France,” he squealed—turning and facing a sea of enraged faces, “I am innocent of all the charges brought against me! I can defend myself. I . . .”

And all the time that little silver bell was ringing shrilly—against him. There was no mercy in the House for Robespierre.

He tumbled down the stairs. Giddily, swaying to and fro, he hurried down the gangway.

“Attention! Attention!” he called.

The little bell rang convulsively.

“I accept the decree against Robespierre,” called the President. “I arrest him in the name of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality.”

The ushers at the door stared aghast at each other. They hardly dared obey their orders.

“Ah!” shrieked Robespierre. “Let go of me! Citizens, as God lives, you are laboring under a grave delusion. I denounce Tallien, the arch-traitor!”

The bell rang again.

“Carry him out,” said the President.

“To prison—to prison!” shouted the House as one voice.

“No, try him at once!” cried a dissentient member.

Up rose Tallien. “Citoyen President, I move a petition in the name of law and order that from to-day no suspected individuals are imprisoned. And that all suspected persons are to be set at liberty.”

A deafening roar reached Robespierre as, bound, dis-

figured, bleeding, he was hustled into a common cab—a condemned man.

All the church bells jangled and pealed. All Paris was agog with excitement. The news of Robespierre's downfall spread like wildfire. Joy is as contagious as tears. Strangers fell on each other's necks and wept for happiness. On the morning following Robespierre's arrest, men and women laughed aloud and danced together in the public streets.

In the midst of this hurly-burly, down the Rue Lafayette there came in sight a sorry procession. Mean carts they were, packed close with worthless lives—that's to say they had been worthless yesterday—to-day they were infinitely precious. Fervent Samaritans—of both sexes—surrounded the carts and would have dragged the dazed prisoners out of the jaws of death. Words of pity, of consolation, of tenderness ran like milk down the crowded street. "This shall not be," they said. "Be at liberty, brothers. Take courage, sisters." The jailers in charge—who had had no fresh orders—beat the people back. The carts, with their amazed load of humanity, moved on. It is sad to note that, in spite of protest, the guillotine worked at regulation speed on the morning following Robespierre's indictment. Galloping horsemen scattered the crowds. Galloping horsemen surrounded the grim prisons (by order). Orders—counter-orders were given and received with astonishing rapidity. Food for thought, rich as a harvest in Siberia. . . . Men chattered and laughed on the verge of lunacy. Not one really sane man lived that day in Paris!

It all happened—and gospel truth it is.

At night the sky was lit by a *feu de joie*. The bells, the rejoicing bells, rang under livid skies.

"'Tis the end," they said, "the end of iniquity."

Robespierre passed the night strapped to a table—his back to the jeers of his jailers. How they had laughed

at the great little man! They had taunted his godship—they had jeered at his blue vestments—at his trousers of white nankeen, at his face all forlorn, nay, his face all anguished! This was TERROR!

By morning he sat up, all of a heap—a bullet wound, ugly and bleeding, ploughing his left jaw, breaking it clean; his mouth hanging open, like a broken toy. He had failed to die. He had only robbed himself of speech. He could still feel pain, dishonor, defeat. . . . So they brought him into the light—side by side with his nasty brother (he who, trying to escape, fell into a cesspool, to be, presently, fished out). Together in a common tumbril they jolted through Paris.

Someone had bound Robespierre's jaw with a dirty white rag—there were crimson patches on it. His eyes were very dumb. It was the end of all things. Behind him, in front of him, and around him there surged a triumphant and curious crowd.

"It is Robespierre," they said. "Look, my friend—it is Robespierre!"

The bells rang loudly. . . .

Down familiar streets he journeyed.

La Guillotine had moved back to her old place. Once again she stood, in the brilliant sunshine, on the Place de la Révolution,—waiting.

The whole world waited. At the very end the world held her breath.

They hurried him up on the platform and gave him over to Samson.

A man pulled at his bandage. Robespierre's broken jaw fell down, revealing a shattered, terrifying face, strangely familiar.

His godship pealed a hideous, unnatural shriek. He was held down . . . he was dead.

CHAPTER XLV

THE spider hung motionless in his own net surrounded by prison flies. He was no longer interesting. Alive he had distracted the ladies. They would tap their elegant fingers, straining every nerve to reach the little dirty window, barred by iron and filmy cobwebs. To reach the window they had to stand on the chair, balancing themselves on the tips of their miserable shoes—such deplorable shoes—in a vain effort to annoy the busy spider. He gave them never a wink. He had his spider eyes fixed on flies, a numberless host at Les Carmes—and not on the prisoners.

For the last hour or so Joséphine had languidly amused herself by ridiculing Térézia's valiant and fruitless effort to reach a vulnerable spot in Tallien's "lion heart."

Her passionate appeal to her lover had been made in vain. It hadn't achieved its purpose; neither her letters nor her toy dagger, dramatically tied with a piece of pink satin ribbon (quite a clean piece, too), had been of any effect.

"*Hélas!*" said Joséphine, "you can bet your handkerchief—it is only half a one—that he flung your symbolic dagger into a handy drawer, and that by now he has forgotten its existence. No doubt he read your letters, and no doubt he kissed them affectionately. Kisses are utterly worthless in the wrong places. Nasty brute! I wouldn't wonder if each time you wrote, as a sign of sympathy he ate an extra nice supper. Hot soup, fish, roast beef, jellies, and those little cream tarts which I love. We won't forgive him the tarts in a hurry, baked to perfection, with a dash of rum and a thought of sugar. *N'est-ce pas, chérie?*"

Joséphine turned, with her brilliant eyes aglow, to the duchess for sympathy. Térézia was looking mulish, staring at the opposite wall. Her silence was almost as oppressive as the heat. After all, poor girl, she had done her best. But she needn't have been so cocksure of her man. A born coward is not easily turned into a dauntless hero. After all, Tallien was only a lackey's son. No one could say that his ancestors were famous.

The duchess smiled and assured Joséphine her recipe for the cream tarts was quite correct. She nodded her little curly head to give emphasis to her statement. The good God had given the duchess hair which curled naturally even under the most trying conditions.

She had had a severe attack of prison fever, but was now convalescent, though woefully thin. The prison diet grew from bad to worse. Prison routine, though of monotonous regularity, was none the less heart-breaking. Joséphine said the dramatic element saved them from madness. Would their names stand on the fatal list? That was always a question of some little interest. Madness was worse than fleas, she'd declare, and far worse than physical discomfort and dirt. *Faute de mieux*, they could always cultivate their minds.

She was wise, was Joséphine. Ninon was good. Térézia was impatient.

For eight months, eight intolerably long months, these tired women (Térézia excepted, she'd only been eight weeks at Les Carmes) had watched and waited and hoped, and seen too much of each other. By now they knew each other's stock phrases. They knew each other's faults, and they had glimpsed—without great satisfaction—each other's good qualities.

Joséphine addressed her conversation exclusively to the duchess. Then she pillowed her head upon Ninon's knees and shut her eyes and sighed, and looked up and sighed again, and went to sleep.

Ninon took out of her pocket a tiny calf-bound volume and began to read. She had read the book many times.

Térédia did not try to conceal her bitter disappointment. At this moment nothing would have given her so much pleasure as to plunge her toy dagger into the cowardly heart of her lover, Tallien. Ugh! how she hated him; his immense smile; his immense conceit; his lowborn, thieving instincts. Was there ever such a dirty swine?

She shivered. . . .

And he had kissed her mouth (her incomparable mouth); he had held her in his arms (her incomparable self). Even now her crowning characteristic asserted itself. She would die game. She would die vain!

And yet—the vast pity of death.

Life was glorious. She was so young, and so entirely capable of enjoying herself to the uttermost. If Tallien only proved himself a man—or a fair imitation of one—she swore, with quick revulsion of feeling, that she wouldn't let him go unrewarded. She would thrill him by her exquisite tenderness. She would worship him with her body and soul. She would be his slave, his creature, his toy. . . .

From far, far off there came a murmur of voices. A heavy door banged below. Someone screamed.

"Oh!" said Joséphine, waking up and complaining of a stiff neck. "Your fine lover, Térédia, has very sensibly gone to bed on top of that fine supper. The little dagger is no longer picturesque, devoid of hope. Chance is the most decorative and romantic element in life. (Oh, I'm so deadly hungry!) *Plus que Reine . . . hélas, hélas*, I am so disappointed in my darling old witch. A young girl will believe anything nice when the sky is blue, to match her lover's eyes. My first affair was a sailor, a most adorable English sailor. All the month of May his ship lay at anchor in the bay of St. Pierre. I taught him six Creole love-songs. He had a voice to shame a nightingale. I was seventeen and hadn't a care in the world—*hélas, hélas!*"

Térédia stopped Joséphine's lamenting with an imperative gesture. Something *was* happening! She sprang to

her feet, and with all her force she rattled the handle of the barred door.

"The place may be on fire," she said. "They must open the door."

Les Carmes, habitually a place of silence, had grown suddenly noisy. Heavy footsteps came down the echoing, immense passage. They could hear men arguing and women sobbing. And the great bell rang.

"Let us out, for Christ's sake! let us out!" called Joséphine, with a sob in her throat. She also rattled the door.

Térédia turned round and drew herself up to her full height.

"It is freedom," she said. "France is saved, and Tallien is the greatest man in the world, and I love him."

"Who wouldn't love him!" said Joséphine impatiently, hurling the chair against the door. "This delay is intolerable! Where is Joseph? Too bad of Joseph not to remember us! I will scold him severely. There is another bell. Listen! More bells. It is a beautiful summer evening. With any luck we will get home in time for late dinner. My dear," she reached up and kissed Térédia, "all my life I will remember you. What sufferings we have endured together! . . . Ten thousand devils! Open the door!"

Térédia smoothed her hair, and drew together an obvious rent in her bodice.

"Ninon, lend me your lace scarf, there's a darling. You look a picture as it is."

The duchess was on her knees, at the foot of their wretched bed, saying her prayers. "God, I thank Thee," she murmured. "God, I thank Thee for all Thy mercies."

Térédia shrugged her shoulders. She thought the prayer both exaggerated and premature.

The cell door was flung open.

"You are at liberty," called a surly turnkey. "Robespierre is dead, or practically dead. There is such a hubbub and confusion down below, no one really understands

what has happened. Anyhow, all prisoners are to be released. Out you go. Better make haste."

And the surly turnkey (a real angel) vanished with a heavy tread down the stone corridor, jingling an immense bunch of keys.

The ladies stared at each other. The news was rather staggering, you know. Robespierre accused, condemned, dead! Long live Tallien! What a man—what a glory of a man!

They drove away together in a ramshackle conveyance, laughing, talking, and questioning the polite Joseph up to the very last. How had it all come about? Had all the prisoners been released? Who was at the head of affairs? Wasn't the air lovely? Weren't there many people about? And why did they stare? Why were some crying? Did they look so *very* dreadful?

Joseph, having assisted the ladies into the coach, and given the driver his orders, answered as well as he could their inquiries.

"Good-by, dear M. Joseph," said Joséphine. "Your kindness has been invaluable. Are you perfectly sure that all these terrible men have been guillotined?"

"No, madam, I am perfectly certain Citoyen Tallien lives."

"But of course, he is the hero of the hour! But for his splendid courage——" she shuddered. "Look there is Mme. de la Trémoille. And poor Mme. Victoire."

A group of prisoners were slowly, with uncertain footsteps, coming across the unevenly paved prison yard. They looked like spectres in the evening light—ragged spectres.

Mme. de la Trémoille had lost her husband and both her children. Out of all her family she alone had been spared the death penalty. She walked with her splendid upright carriage towards the gate, assisting a younger lady (who nevertheless had snow-white hair). The younger lady was talking volubly, telling everyone she

met that, within a few hours, she'd have the happiness of embracing her children, who were safe in the country.

"Poor dear," said Joséphine. "As I told you, Térézia, madness is far worse than fleas. Her suffering has deprived her of her reason. When her mother and children died of fever, just after her husband was guillotined, she went mad. She is quite tractable, poor dear, but, as you see, quite mad. Her eyes are horrid. Don't look at her. I wish they could kill Robespierre twice over. Joseph, Joseph! Was he brave?"

"I was not present at the arrest, madam."

"I don't mean him. How did Tallien behave?"

"We must be going," said Térézia. "Good-by, M. Joseph. I'll send you a card with the exact dates. Remember you've promised to come to my receptions."

"And to mine also," said Joséphine. "And tell your nice brother to bring his friend, the little general. What was his name?"

"Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Oh, I remember; a clever Corsican officer, with heaps of brothers and sisters, and still more ambitions. Do you think he will succeed in getting everything he wants?"

"Possibly."

"How I envy him," said Térézia.

"Please tell the man to drive on," said the duchess.

"I know," said Térézia. "I'll marry him."

"And leave Tallien out in the cold!" screamed Joséphine. "Isn't she a pig? Joseph, I quite forgot. If you should meet M. de Beauharnais before I do, give him my love and address. I am going to stay with Aunt Fanny. In future I intend to love him with all my heart. He deserves nothing less. I am so happy. Are we really free? Is it a dream, M. Joseph?"

The cab drove off, and M. Joseph was spared telling Madame de Beauharnais the truth. He was convinced that she would bear her widowhood with fortitude.

"Yes, darling Térézia," continued Joséphine, "you must marry Tallien at once. For every reason."

Térédia yawned.

"Not this week, as I live!" she said. "For one week I intend to stay in bed and enjoy myself; do nothing but eat and sleep and grow fat and beautiful, and revel in clean linen and unlimited baths. For one week I'll shut my doors in the face of Fate."

"Et après?"

"I'll do my duty."

"Well, your future is settled very satisfactorily. Only don't be stupid."

"I am not stupid," said Térédia; "far from it!" Suddenly she kicked off a tattered shoe and flung it into the street. She wore no stockings, for the simple reason that she possessed none. Affectionately she stared at her little pink toes and her exquisite ankle.

"They are not so very dirty, after all," she said complacently.

The duchess, who was seated with her back to the horses, looked tearfully happy. She hadn't been listening to her friends' conversation, being deeply engrossed in her own concerns. Her whole mind was concentrated on her babies. In a very little while they'd be in her arms. . . .

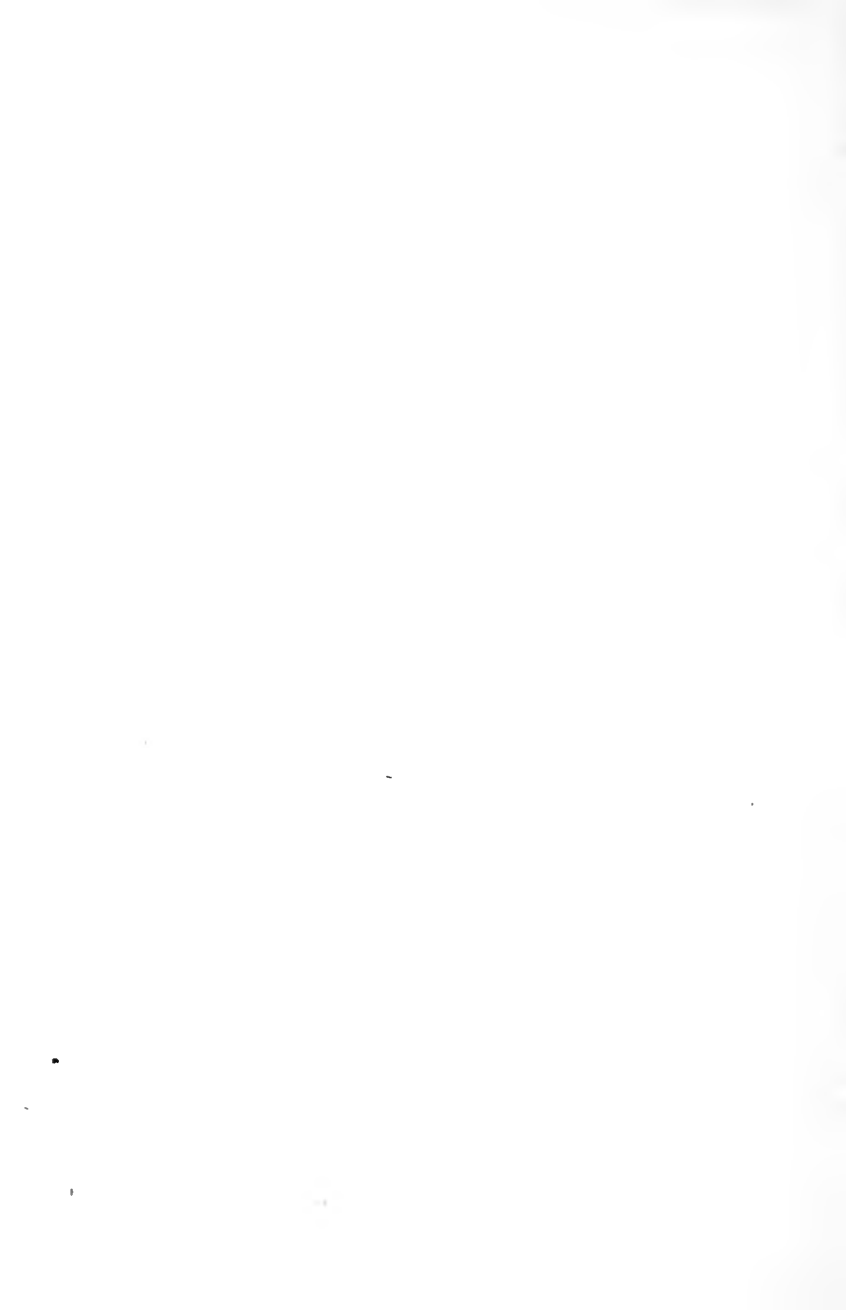
Joséphine bent forward and kissed away the tears running down the thin, pale cheeks of her little friend. "Ninon," she said, "I understand, *vois-tu*. I'm also a mother. Only Eugène and Hortense are no longer babies."

Térédia, behind her borrowed scarf, which she had arranged very becomingly round her head, looked curiously at the passers-by. So, the Reign of Terror was over! . . . She smiled a triumphant smile. Her mind was full of new speculations.









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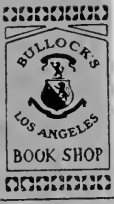
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Marat Mort.

From the painting by David.

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But there remains that fervor, that sincerity of which I have spoken, that driving force, and there remains—for the spectator—the duty of searching out the human creature behind his pompous stagecraft. You begin to apprehend him a little more sympathetically when you follow his doings on the return from Italy, and, before very long, his participation in the Revolution. He strode like a man into the conflict. In 1792 he was elected to the Convention. He became the friend of Robespierre, gained some prestige thereby, and, with the turn of the wheel, shared in the repercussions of his leader's downfall, tasting captivity. The point I would stress is that he rose to the exigencies of his time, was as deeply touched by the emotions of that great upheaval as though he had never in his life had an academic thought. I know nothing more poignant than his sketch of Marie Antoinette in the tumbril on her way to the guillotine, an outline drawn as he watched from the window of his fellow Representative, Jullien. No mere antiquarian could have achieved such stark pathos. If you want realism, fairly vibrant realism, look at his profile of Lepelletier de Saint-Fargeau, another actor in the Revolutionary drama. Or at that grisly picture in the Brussels Museum, the famous "Marat Mort." It has, to our modern eyes, an ordered, academic simplicity, but it was brought forth with a fierce vigor out of the very murk and turmoil of a volcanic epoch.

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